VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

BY AN OLD MAID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

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C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.



VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER.

In the year 18—, an opulent merchant, of the name of Harley, resided in the neighbourhood of Liverpool. He was universally esteemed and regarded, not only as one of the wealthiest, but the steadiest and most respectable of the inhabitants of that great commercial town. Mr. Harley was a man of considerable natural ability, and strict integrity, to which was added a thorough knowledge of accounts; these qualifications aided by steadiness and general propriety of conduct, caused him to be raised from

a very subordinate situation, in the counting-house of an eminent merchant of the name of Danvers; to that of principal and confidential clerk; and in a few years to that of junior partner in his extensive concerns. Mr. Harley now for the first time ventured to think of entering the matrimonial state; he had long known and highly estimated a young lady, who, to an agreeable person and manners, united an amiable disposition.

She was the orphan daughter of a beneficed clergyman; but being at her father's death left without a home, and a portion of 500*l.* only, she was glad to reside with a distant relative, who considered her services in instructing the younger branches of the family an equivalent for her board. Mr. Harley's excellent character was fully appreciated by this amiable woman; therefore, when he proposed himself for her acceptance, he met with no affectation of indifference; sh frankly acknowledged her preference, and agreed to his wish for an early

union—since they had no friends to consult—no settlements to make—and their preparations were few and simple. In a month from that time, Mr. Harley took his amiable bride to the home which he had sometime occupied, and of which the counting-house formed a part. Years rolled smoothly o'er the heads of Mr. and Mrs. Harley. Every thing seemed to prosper with them, yet they continued to live in a simple and modest style, differing but little from that in which they first set out. There might be trifling internal comforts or luxuries, of which neither the possession nor the want would be noticed by others than themselves; but to the eyes of strangers, the junior partner of the wealthy Mr. Danvers seemed satisfied with the humble mediocrity in which he had originally been placed. Yet even at this period, when Mr. Harley saw the beautiful little figures of his two daughters (who were born within as many years after his marriage) in graceful gambols at his feet, visions of future grandeur for

them at least would sometimes float in his brain.

About seven years after their marriage, Mrs. Harley was attacked by a severe and dangerous illness, through which she was with difficulty enabled to struggle. When in a state of convalescence, her physician ordered her to take daily carriage exercise; upon hearing which, Mr. Harley immediately said he should purchase a close carriage, as a hired one was not suited to an invalid. His amiable wife remonstrated with him on the impropriety of their encountering such an expense; but with a smile, he assured her, that were he that moment to retire from business, he could with ease not only keep her a carriage, but any other comfort, convenience, or even luxury, she might wish.

Not long after the above occurrence, a very magnificent place, in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, was offered for sale, in consequence of the failure of its proprietor. Mr. Harley proposed purchasing it; when his wife, with alarm in her countenance, seriously expostulated with

him on the imprudence of their living in so expensive a place.

Mrs. Harley usually acquiesced to every wish of her husband, and hitherto relying entirely on his prudence and probity, had never expressed a desire to know any thing more of his circumstances, than that all was going on well; and when he had proposed showing her a statement of his affairs, had said, "You know I am quite ignorant upon all matters of business; if you are satisfied that all is prospering, I can require no more." Now, so far from agreeing at once to his proposition of purchasing Belle Vue Park, she would not hear of it; although he assured her he could well afford to live in a style suitable to the place. In vain he placed before her an estimate of his property. The hitherto mild and gentle wife would not look at it; saying that, seeing, as she did daily, those who were supposed in the greatest affluence become bankrupts, she wished not to live in such a style as might probably bring that misfortune upon themselves. Since Mrs. Harley could not be

persuaded to consent to her husband's wishes, and loving her too tenderly to act in direct opposition to them, he called in the assistance of his partner, old Mr. Danvers; who to her surprise assured her, that her husband, then a rich man, was certain to become much more so, as he had already a third part in all his concerns, and at his death would probably have a further increase; since his talents for business were such that he had taken the entire management for some time, and had nearly doubled the emolument arising from their different mercantile speculations. Mrs. Harley could in reason object no longer to her husband's desire; though as she bade adieu to her comparatively humble abode, and took possession of her splendid residence, a melancholy foreboding of evil seemed to overpower her.

Surrounded by every elegance and luxury that wealth could bestow, Mrs. Harley determined, as far as in her power, to bring up her children in simplicity and frugality. Soon after she had gone to Belle Vue to reside, she pre-

served another daughter to her husband, who had anxiously looked forward to her *accouchement*, in the hope of a son being born to inherit his wealth and name. Though greatly disappointed, he still hoped for an heir; but not having any other child during the lapse of several years, he determined that his eldest daughter should be an heiress. His more humble wife besought him to make no difference in the fortunes of his children.

"Such conduct," said she, "can only be excusable where there is a name and property, which ought not to be separated; for example, where an old family would otherwise sink into oblivion."

To which he replied, "I have at present no name worth preserving, you think; but I wish to be the founder of a family, as I have already been of a fortune; and I mean to purchase estates which I hope will be joined to the name of Harley for centuries."

Mrs. Harley gently sighed, and dropped the argument, then and *for ever*; but she deter-

mined to persevere in the plan she had adopted on coming to Belle Vue, for she was now fully convinced, of what she had before only feared, that ambition formed a prominent feature in her husband's character, and that it might eventually lead to his ruin, as she had too often perceived it do to that of others. Consequently, whilst apparently in the enjoyment of every luxury that could be devised, Mrs. Harley steadily pursued her system of frugal simplicity. She was fortunate enough to procure for her daughter a governess, who, to polished manners and an excellent disposition, added a great fund of general information; whilst, although not what is considered highly accomplished, she possessed that which the anxious mother justly conceived of more importance than all other advantages—the soundest religious principles.

Mrs. Harley made this lady acquainted with the plan she had laid down for her daughters, and found her most readily agree to meet her views. But although she considered accom-

plishments as of comparatively minor importance, she yet wished her daughters to have all the real advantages which wealth could bestow; therefore, the best masters that could be procured were in constant attendance upon them. Under such excellent guidance, the young people grew up apparently all their estimable mother could desire. Maria appeared in disposition almost her counterpart, though possessed of more brilliant talents. Harriet had more of the pride and ambition of her father, and inwardly rebelled at what she considered unnecessary privation; for, although keeping a very large establishment, Mrs. Harley did not allow her daughters to have any personal attendance, and whilst their own table was not only plentifully but luxuriously served each day, that of the school-room consisted of the plainest food only. Mrs. Harley, in her own person, set the example she was anxious her daughters should follow, whilst in acquiescence with the wish of her husband, and in conformity with the elegance of

their mansion, she kept a large establishment and an elegant table.

The Miss Harleys rarely entered a close carriage, except for the purpose of attending divine service, which was at a considerable distance; walking exercise their mother considered more conducive to their health, as likewise more in accordance with her general views: but as years rolled on, and with them an assurance of her husband's increasing prosperity, they were allowed the indulgence of riding horses, as this exercise, should misfortune hereafter deprive them of the power of keeping horses, would not, she thought, enervate the mind or body like that of a close carriage. Maria and Harriet Harley had few young companions; those of whom they saw the most were the sons of Mr. Danvers, who having been early deprived of their mother, at all times found at Belle Vue a cheerful home, for as much of their time as their father would admit of their absence during their vacations. The Danverses were some years older than their

young female companions; consequently, George, the eldest son, began, when about nineteen, to find that he could meet with young associates more to his taste than two little girls. But Frederick still delighted in attending them in their walks, and in leading the pony when Maria first began to ride; whilst she applied to him in all her little difficulties and emergencies for assistance. His generous, fearless disposition, his talents, his affectionate temper, all made him a delightful playmate in childhood, and companion in youth. Frederick and Maria grew up in mutual attachment—they loved without being aware of it; and if the amiable Mrs. Harley sometimes suspected it, she saw no cause for objection. Frederick was almost as dear as her own children, and equally well provided for she was convinced he must be at his father's death.

Upon one occasion, old Mr. Danvers jestingly observed to Mr. Harley, that he thought there was a prospect of their families being more

closely united hereafter than they already were by mercantile concerns only; to which the latter replied, "Nothing, my dear sir, could give me greater pleasure than to see either of my younger daughters united to one of your sons; but Maria I have different views for—I mean her to be an heiress, and I have already a suitable match in my eye."

Mr. Danvers had spoken without any serious thought upon the subject, and therefore his partner's reply would have been forgotten altogether, had not his eldest son observed, at breakfast the following morning, that the Miss Harleys' were likely to be the largest fortunes in the county.

"One of them, at least, will be so," replied Mr. Danvers, relating at the same time what Mr. Harley had said his views and intentions were.

This information was like a bolt of ice shot across the heart of Frederick; he arose from the table, for the first time conscious of the state of

his affections. He was engaged to ride out with his two young friends, the eldest of whom was then seventeen; he kept his engagement, although so evidently out of spirits as to attract the sympathy of Maria, and the raillery of Harriet. He no longer spent hours daily at Belle Vue, as he had been in the habit of doing, during his vacations from college, where he had been for some time. Maria, surprised and mortified by this change in her favourite, friend, and companion, in vain endeavoured to account for it; when accidentally meeting him as she walked alone in a distant part of the park, the artless joy she expressed at seeing him, and the questions which she asked as to the cause of his absence, threw him off his guard—he confessed that he loved her, and that he feared he had little prospect of gaining her father's consent. Maria, perfectly the child of nature, acknowledged a reciprocal affection—said she never could marry any one, if not him who had been her companion, friend, and guide, for so

long a period; and that if her being an heiress were to be the only obstacle, she should beg her father to transfer the fortune he meant for her to Harriet—her youthful and disinterested lover assented to this plan with delight.

In a few days Frederick would return to Oxford, and as he was not then of age, Maria begged that he might not propose for her hand until the next vacation; when, should her parents agree to his proposition, he would meet with no obstacle from her; but until that time they were to consider themselves entirely at liberty, for although she could not form any engagement without the knowledge of her parents, they were yet both so young, she thought it better not to propose it at present.

Frederick entirely coincided with her in opinion; he was too noble-minded to wish for a moment to draw her into a clandestine engagement—in fact, happy as it made him to find that he had such a place in the heart of Maria, he could only forgive himself for having thus

told his love, in consequence of its having been unpremeditated. Very soon after Frederick's return to college, his father died, leaving him fifty thousand pounds, and the rest of his property to his brother; who, together with Mr. Harley, had managed their extensive concerns for a long time previous.

Upon Frederick's coming of age, it was to be optional with himself, whether his property should remain in business, or be drawn out immediately. As he intended to follow the sacred profession, he meant to claim his portion, and be content without further increase; but until the arrival of that period, he determined not to ask the consent of Mr. Harley to his union with Maria.

Mr. Harley's failing point was, as I have before intimated, ambition; had he remained in moderate circumstances, this would probably never have shown itself. He was far from avaricious—none gave more liberally to public or private charity—none, in a place so famed for

its public spirit and noble institutions, were more anxious to promote all which could conduce to the prosperity of Liverpool than Mr. Harley; whilst in his house and establishment, every thing was conducted upon a scale almost approaching magnificence.

All this he could do without imprudence, for he knew that it was in his power to provide most amply for his younger daughters, whilst his eldest was destined to be a wealthy heiress. It had long been his determination that she should marry into an ancient and titled family, and yet retain his name. He was acquainted with a baronet, who, having large though deeply involved estates in an adjoining county, and an only son, for whom he was anxious to free his property from every incumbrance, readily assented to Mr. Harley's proposition, that an union should take place between that son and Maria Harley, although in that event he must give up a name which he had been taught to look upon as one of his proudest boasts. Sir

James Travene felt this to be a severe trial; but by such means only could he save the ancient family property from utter destruction. With a mixture of joy and sorrow, the baronet had accordingly acceded to Mr. Harley's proposal, and without consulting either of those whose happiness was so materially concerned, the two fathers had entered into an engagement for their children; Mr. Harley, on his part, agreeing that one hundred thousand pounds should be paid down on the day of marriage, and that a second should be secured to the young couple at his death. To enable him to complete this arrangement on Mr. Travene's attaining the age of twenty-one, without withdrawing too large a part of his capital from their extensive mercantile concerns, Mr. Harley had been induced to listen to the suggestions of the eldest son of Mr. Danvers, and, with his father's concurrence, to enter into various speculations for the increase of wealth, which was already immense. For some time every thing they attempted pros-

posed; and thus they were, like almost all successful gamblers, led on from one speculation to another, each day saying this should be the last. An eminent stockbroker had prevailed upon them to speculate in the funds; for a short time they were fortunate, but just after remitting him an unusually large sum, this supposed wealthy broker failed, causing the ruin of many, and an immense loss to Messrs. Danvers and Harley. A proposal had been made for them to establish a great mercantile house in America. The opening seemed favourable, consequently they embarked in it with avidity; but to their surprise and disappointment, lost fifty thousand pounds the first year; their agent wrote that the sum ventured was too small, which had caused the miscarriage; adding, if four times that amount was sent, he would undertake to double it in as many years—the reasons he gave for so thinking were plausible and successful. The money was advanced.

In five years from the period in which the

above speculations were entered upon, Messrs. Danvers and Harley had proposed to retire from business. They little surmised what a third part of that time would bring to pass! Soon after the death of Mr. Danvers, information was received that the American agent had absconded, after turning all the merchandise which had been intrusted to him, and for which he could obtain a ready sale, into cash: immediately upon which, the creditors of the house had seized upon what remained, whilst their debtors offered them in payment for considerable sums, only immense tracts of land, overgrown with timber, and at too great a distance from the coast to be made profitable in any way. The tide of fortune had indeed turned. The last season had not been favourable in the West Indies, where they had extensive possessions; but their agent had given them hopes of immense crops, when a letter arrived informing them that one of the most tremendous hurricanes ever known had completely devastated the whole country—that

not only the produce was utterly destroyed, with buildings of immense value, but several hundred individuals swept from the earth; and the ground left in such a state, that many seasons must elapse ere a crop could be obtained. The agent requested an immense and immediate remittance, for the support of those slaves whose lives were spared, for the purpose of restoring the buildings, and for again endeavouring to bring the land into cultivation. This was a severe blow, following so fast upon the others; but neither Mr. Harley nor his young partner despaired of being able to bring all right. "Until lately," said they, "we have known only success; but we will *not* suffer ourselves to be overwhelmed with misfortunes, which had they come at distant periods, would have been no more than have fallen to the lot of thousands; we will stem this torrent by our exertions; our richly-freighted ships are on their voyage from Russia—they will enable us to send out assistance to Jamaica, and in a few

years we shall receive, as heretofore, fifty thousand per annum from there; in the interim, we must turn our thoughts to other sources of emolument." Thus they spoke, and thus they hoped!

Whilst watching for the arrival of those ships which were of such infinite importance to them, and of whose approach they had been apprized by a smaller and swifter sailing-vessel, which had passed them some time previous, the direful information arrived of a sudden storm having caused the loss of one ship, with its valuable cargo, and of another having been so much injured as to be obliged to have its rich freight thrown overboard, and with difficulty to save the lives of the crew. Mr. Danvers heard the fearful news whispered on the Exchange, and hastened thence to ascertain the truth: he found Mr. Harley seated at his desk—speechless—motionless—his glazed, unconscious eyes fixed upon the fatal letter, which his hand convulsively grasped!

He had been seized with an apoplectic fit, from which he never recovered. The last shock had snapped the cord which bound him to life. He who a short time before was master of almost unbounded wealth, died a beggar!

Immediately upon Mr. Harley's death, his widow, who was informed by Mr. Danvers of the deplorable state of her affairs, retired to a cottage which had been occupied by the head gardener, and which was at that moment vacant; giving up every part of the property to the creditors of her late husband, without the smallest reservation of even those articles which had been considered as exclusively belonging to her daughters. The creditors, as a proof of the respect in which they held the character of her late husband, as well as herself, made over to her the amount of her original fortune, five hundred pounds, with the wearing apparel, ornaments, and numerous little articles of use or amusement, which had belonged to herself and daughters, including their books and musical

instruments—in addition to whatever furniture or plate Mrs. Harley might require. The apartments she not only occupied at that moment, but for the rest of her life must probably occupy, were so few and small, that a selection of the simplest and least valuable furniture was easily made. The change, from a splendid house and large establishment, to a gardener's cottage and one young person only as a servant, was indeed great; but this amiable woman, who had from principle accustomed herself and children to eat only the plainest food—to dress in the simplest style—and to require little or no personal attendance, now felt the full advantage of the plan she had pursued.

Her daughters, instead of being overpowered by a change so unexpected, thought only of exerting themselves to contribute to their mother's comfort; that in addition to the grief of losing her loved and deeply regretted partner, the change of situation should be felt by her as little as possible.

The lady who had so long and in so exemplary a manner performed the office of governess to the young people, begged to be allowed still to remain with them—to assist in all their endeavours to mitigate the affliction of their mother—and to continue the instruction of her youngest daughter (still quite a child)—but her liberal offer to remain without a salary was tearfully, though gratefully, declined.

"From this time," said Mrs. Harley, "I must be the sole instructress of my youngest treasure, as my eldest daughters purpose endeavouring to procure situations, not only for their own maintenance, but ours likewise; since I do not know any other means of procuring an income equal to our support, even in the most frugal manner; for I do not wish, if possible to avoid it, to use the principal of the five hundred pounds, so generously given to me."

Miss Edwin could not condemn a resolution which appeared to her so praiseworthy; and, deeply regretting the necessity of so doing, she

bade adieu to the amiable family with whom she had resided during many years; promising to come to them should they ever wish for her assistance or society; since she had in their house obtained a small independence, which would prevent the necessity of again going out as a governess. It was not one of the least distressing circumstances attending their present situation, that they were obliged to part with all their old and faithful servants, many of whom begged to be permitted to remain; and one, who had nursed the Miss Harleys, entreated to become their only servant, saying to them that the contents of her purse (the savings of her life), were wholly at their service. But their mistress, whilst she assured them of her heartfelt gratitude for the proofs they all gave of attachment to herself, and her family, informed them that it would not accord with the plan she had laid down, were she to keep more than one young girl as a domestic.

At length, though not without difficulty, she

succeeded in her efforts to dismiss all these kind petitioners to be allowed to participate in her sorrow. As soon as they were left to themselves in their humble home, they endeavoured to form plans for their future conduct; when, having done so, they determined to put them in execution with as little delay as was possible.

Mrs. Harley applied to her friends to procure if in their power, situations for her daughters as governesses. This their extreme youth, being only in their seventeenth and eighteenth years, made peculiarly difficult. Yet their mother fondly hoped, that where known, it would readily be believed, that brought up as they had been, they were likely to be more eligible instructresses than many persons twice their age.

A clergyman in a distant part of Lancashire, who had known Mrs. Harley in her youth, heard of her sad reverse of fortune, and, with the concurrence of his wife, an amiable and domestic, but very delicate person, proposed that Harriet should reside with them; where,

although she should be treated in every respect as a daughter, she would be required, under the superintendence of their mother, to afford instruction to her two children, in such branches of education as their tender years were capable of receiving.

Mrs. Harley did not hesitate a moment in accepting so eligible an offer; as notwithstanding the salary was small, a desirable and respectable home, accompanied by an opportunity of improving herself in the art of tuition, made it all that could at that time be hoped for; since, although for so very young a person, Harriet was both well-informed and highly accomplished, she could not by any means compete with her elder sister in either particular.

Four months had elapsed from the death of Mr. Harley, and Maria had not heard of any situation at all likely to answer her purpose; though young in point of years, her strong natural sense, aided by considerable genius, and every advantage that a judicious education

could bestow, caused her to be not only an accomplished, but what was of infinitely more importance, an intelligent and highly principled young woman; capable of resigning every selfish gratification, and enduring the severest privations for her bereaved parents. She endured in silence a sorrow of which none were aware, for the blow which had reduced her family and friends to poverty, had, she felt assured, severed her from Frederick Danvers for ever. She had told him that he must forget what had passed between them, as, from the moment of her father's death, she had resolved to devote all her talents to the support of her mother and little sister. He besought her to let him hope, that should his efforts to gain an independence be crowned with success, he might then sue to Mrs. Harley for her hand; but to this she would not listen, since she considered an engagement to her might injure the little prospect he had of succeeding in his views, without fortune and without interest; whilst her duty

required her to devote herself to her mother. She grieved in secret over the destruction of her early hopes, whilst she rejoiced that her affectionate parent knew not how much she resigned from a point of duty.

Maria finding every effort to gain a suitable situation unavailing, accepted the invitation of a relation of her mother's, who resided in the city of London, to make his house her home, until she could meet with one. Mrs. Harley had, during the two preceding years, taken her daughters to town for the advantage of masters, when they had occasionally seen the kind-hearted, though somewhat rough and unpolished, Mr. Jones, whom she had made a point of visiting, as he had been kind to her in her youth, since which period a yearly interchange of presents had taken place at Christmas. Maria was received in London by Mr. and Mrs. Jones with the greatest kindness; they left no effort untried to gain a desirable situation for her, and soon heard of several ladies who were in

want of governesses. She would greatly have preferred engaging herself to a family in the country; but situated as she was, with the knowledge that all her own family, excepting Harriet, were almost entirely dependent upon her for support, since the interest of their small pittance would do but little towards it, she thought it her duty to take the first respectable situation which should offer, where the salary was a good one. A rich tradesman's wife in the city made so liberal a proposal, through the agency of Mr. Jones, who had described the accomplishments of his young relative at the same time that he recounted her melancholy reverse of fortune, that Maria waited upon her without delay; when, shocked to find her coarse and vulgar in her manner, and still more so to see two bold, high-shouldered, hoydenish-looking girls enter the room as her future pupils, who eying her askance, burst into a half-suppressed giggle, she felt that it would be impossible to undertake such a situation, and

therefore politely but positively declined it. On making some remarks to Mrs. Jones on her return, she heard this person had originally been cook, then housekeeper, and lastly wife, to the rich old tradesman, who had enabled her to revel in all the luxuries of wealth.

Her next essay was at the house of a lady of high rank at the west end of the town. Lady G— received her in the most affable manner, assuring her, that should they agree (of which she had little doubt) respecting terms, mode of instruction, &c., she was sure Miss Harley would find the situation of governess in her family highly desirable, and eligible in every respect. "For," she continued, "Hortensia, my only child, is the sweetest-tempered and most amiable girl possible; I never yet had occasion to find fault with her; she has hitherto been singularly unfortunate in her instructresses; but," bowing with a patronising air to Miss Harley, "she is now, I perceive, about to receive ample compensation for all past *disa-*

grémens. I wish my Hortensia, since she is nobly born, and splendidly endowed, both by nature and fortune, to be likewise highly accomplished. I am anxious that she should learn, and thoroughly understand, the German, French, Italian, and Latin languages; Spanish may be postponed until she is somewhat older. I wish her to play the harp and pianoforte scientifically, and to sing (for she has a sweet voice) with taste and feeling. With regard to drawing, all I at present require is, that she should paint landscapes and flowers from nature, miniature portrait-painting may be commenced a year or two hence. Her figure, as you will perceive, is naturally symmetrical and elegant, and all her movements graceful, therefore you will find no difficulty in teaching her to excel in all the most fashionable dances. Of course I need say nothing of the *minor* branches of education, such as religion, the use of the globes, morality, history, and mathematics, as all those may be attended to at her leisure hours."

"I am sorry to inform your ladyship," said Miss Harley, "that I am quite unequal to a situation of so much importance, as conducting the education of your daughter appears to be."

"Oh, by no means, my dear Miss Harley," replied Lady G—, "for I shall gladly procure as many masters as you wish, and all I shall require from you will be, that you should superintend her studies, assist her in preparing for her masters, and make every thing she is to learn a pleasure rather than a task."

"That I fear would be impossible, as few young persons will undergo the labour of learning languages, or indeed any thing which requires much study or application, from choice."

"Very true; but my Hortensia is unlike any one else, she is so very tractable, so very amiable, and so very intelligent: you shall see her, and then I am sure you will agree with me, that there will be no difficulty in what I require from you."

As Lady G— spoke, she rung the bell, and

desired the servant to tell Lady Hortensia that she was wanted. He soon returned, saying, "Her ladyship is engaged, my lady."

"Say Miss Harley, the lady of whom I spoke to her, is here, and I wish to introduce them to each other."

The footman again retired, and as quickly returned, with the information, that Lady Hortensia *would not* attend her mother's summons. Lady G— coloured as she heard the answer of her *sweet, amiable* daughter, and turning to Miss Harley, said, "Well, well, it is of no consequence; this little madcap is in one of her sweet frolicsome humours, when she is always so amusing; I suppose she wishes to postpone the pleasure of your acquaintance, until she becomes your pupil."

Maria again assured Lady G— that she must decline a situation to which she was entirely unequal; and notwithstanding the attempts made to detain her, at length succeeded in her efforts to retreat. As she descended the stairs, she

saw a very pretty little girl peeping at her through a half-open door, and then with a loud laugh calling out, "There goes the new governess—how I will plague her!"

Miss Harley was not surprised to hear a few days afterwards that five governesses had quitted the Countess of G—'s in as many months. Many other situations were named to Maria; but, however eligible they might appear on first hearing of them, on further inquiry they were far from being so. At length, she was fortunate enough to meet with a lady with whom, on her first interview, she was quite charmed. There was in the countenance and manner of Mrs. Manby a tender melancholy, which was peculiarly attractive; whilst her two lovely little girls, engaging in behaviour and gentle in temper, soon obtained a place in the affections of their young governess. Two months passed most agreeably in this family, the master of which Maria had not yet seen, as he was in the north

of England with a shooting-party; he had indeed been some days in town ere she did see him, when, in consequence of his meeting her accidentally in the passage, he asked the children who that beautiful girl was; to which they replied, "Our new governess."

From that period Mr. Manby became, not only a daily visiter in the school-room, but remained so long as to distract the attention of his daughters, and to interfere very materially with their lessons. Maria in vain stated this to Mr. Manby; he only laughed at her anxiety for their improvement. She then spoke to Mrs. Manby, who sighing answered, "Alas! I feared this—I will speak to Mr. Manby, though I doubt it will be to little purpose."

As he still continued to spend a great deal of time in the school-room, Maria supposed that his wife's interference was not likely to be of any service; she therefore spoke in a peremptory manner, saying, during school hours, she

must request that her pupils might be left with her; after that time, she would leave the room to him.

Mr. Manby's looks and manner had been such, more than once, as to bring the blood to Maria's cheeks; and now he expressed himself in terms which she could not misunderstand, and yet so artfully as to prevent the possibility of her expressing with propriety the indignation she felt at his undisguised admiration.

Maria delayed not saying to Mrs. Manby that, deeply as she regretted leaving her and her dear children, she was under the necessity of informing her that circumstances required her absence. It was not one of the least painful things attending her removal, that she could not assign a reason for her departure; but she was spared the necessity of declining to give one, for no sooner had Mrs. Manby heard her express an intention of quitting her, than she replied, "Much as I grieve to lose your society for myself, and your instruction for my children,

I cannot urge you to remain. I do not ask the reason of your departure; I know too well that this roof is not calculated to shelter youth, beauty, and innocence, like yours. I had determined never again to take a young person as a governess; but I was so much prepossessed by your appearance and manner, that I was induced to swerve from my more prudent resolve. I did hope," she added, bursting into tears, "that the peculiarity of your situation would be a claim to respect." Then making an effort to resume a serenity of demeanour, she said, "Where, my dear Miss Harley, do you think of going, when you leave this house—you must not be left without protection in London?"

"To Mrs. Jones, with whom I was staying before I had the pleasure of knowing you—indeed," she continued, "I am very sorry to leave you and the sweet children."

"Thank you, my dear young friend; I know I can never retain any one with me whom I love; even my children, my only consolation, I

believe I must send from me. When do you wish to go?"

Maria hesitatingly replied, "If you would not be displeased by my apparent precipitation, I should say to-morrow."

"You are right—I cannot urge your longer stay."

Maria, seeing how much Mrs. Manby appeared affected, rose to take her leave for the night, and with tears bedewing her own cheeks, withdrew to her apartment.

The following day Mrs. Manby put a bank post bill for a hundred pounds into Maria's hands, saying, "In paying you a year's salary, I only do what is just; therefore, take it as your own, and be assured that whatever cause of complaint Mr. Manby may have given me, want of liberality is not one, as I have an unlimited command over a purse which I know to be very ample."

Maria objected to receive more than a quarter of a year's salary, but finding her refusal gave

pain to her kind friend, and knowing it would enable her to relieve a part of that which her mother would feel at learning she had resigned a situation which had appeared so desirable, she at length acceded to Mrs. Manby's entreaties. With mutual regret, these amiable women parted; and Miss Harley heard afterwards from Mrs. Manby, that she had sent her children to a school in the neighbourhood of London, which, from the account Mrs. Jones accidentally heard of Mr. Manby's libertine conduct, Maria thought was the most prudent step which she could have pursued.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones once more received their young relative with the greatest kindness and hospitality; indeed, could that have answered the purpose of assisting her mother, and could she have eaten the bread of dependence, she need not have sought another home, for theirs, they assured her, was always open to her. Maria remitted nearly all she had received from Mrs. Manby to her mother; but the pleasure

with which she did so was somewhat checked by her uncertainty as to being able to procure an eligible situation; since, though Mr. and Mrs. Jones still heard, through their friends, of several which at first appeared desirable, on further inquiry some insurmountable objection was always discovered. Thus many weeks passed in fruitless endeavours, on the part of Maria, to obtain what she wished; at length, her health and spirits sunk under the unavailing efforts which she made. Of the few families with whom she thought there was a probability of her being able to reside, some objected to her youth, others to her personal appearance, being too attractive—some, to her having been too highly educated, and as they supposed too luxuriously brought up—others to her requiring the treatment due to a gentlewoman: in short, from one cause or another, there seemed but little probability of her succeeding in London; and not without a deep feeling of mortification, she began to talk of again returning into Lancashire, and

fixed a day for that purpose, should she not succeed in her object before its arrival; but she resolved that no common obstacle should prevent her acceptance of the next situation which offered. One day an advertisement in the *Morning Post* to the following purport, attracted her attention:

"Any young lady, of genteel manners and irreproachable character, who is in want of a home, and to whom a liberal salary is an object of importance, may apply by letter to C. G., at the office of this paper. No one need apply to whom emolument will not amply compensate for some unpleasant circumstances."

Now was the moment in which to put her good resolutions in practice; and, without giving herself time to reflect, she wrote to C. G., to inquire into the particulars of the situation, and received an answer requesting her to call in York-street, Portman-square, the following day.

Mrs. Jones accompanied Maria in a coach to the west end of the town; but, as they wished to

make some inquiries respecting the family to whose house they were going, they dismissed the coach, and proceeded to the nearest baker's, by whom they were told, in answer to their queries, that a fortnight before a family had arrived there in a chariot and four, but he was unacquainted with the name, and only knew that they were strangers in London, that he supplied them with bread, and that they paid ready money for all they purchased. A fine, intelligent-looking boy, who was standing near his father whilst he spoke, said, "The servants of the house told me the lady—" here his father interrupted him, saying, "It is of no consequence what the servants said—all we know is, that what they buy they pay for."

Mrs. Jones and Maria, finding it was impossible to induce him to say more on the subject, proceeded somewhat doubtingly towards the place of meeting, where, upon knocking at the door, they were admitted by a servant out of livery, who showing them into a handsome

drawing-room, said he would inform his master of their arrival. In a few minutes the servant returned, saying his master wished to see the lady who had answered the advertisement in another room. Mrs. Jones immediately rose to accompany her friend, when the man observed, that his master was in the adjoining room, but being out of health, he wished to see only those whom business obliged him to receive. As the rooms were separated by folding doors merely, Mrs. Jones reseated herself, whilst Maria proceeded with half-reluctant steps into the next apartment. On first entering, she could with difficulty distinguish the different objects, as she had left a room on which the sun shone brightly through three large windows, whilst the one large window in the other was not only shaded by muslin curtains, but by landscape blinds and partially closed shutters; she therefore did not instantly perceive a figure in black, seated at an extreme corner of the apartment, and which rose from its seat without advancing

a step to receive her. Whilst the servant placed a chair for her at the greatest possible distance from this person, she heard herself addressed by name, and requested in a deep, sonorous voice to be seated. Having complied with this wish, the gentleman in black, for such the figure was, resumed his seat, and addressed her in these words: "May I take the liberty of requesting some particulars respecting your family and situation—any such as you have no objection to intrust to a stranger's ears, and that will be desirable for me to know."

"My story, sir, is soon told—it is that of a thousand others: born and brought up as a gentlewoman, in the expectation of a large fortune, my father's death in embarrassed circumstances has made it necessary for a sister, somewhat my junior, and myself, to endeavour to procure situations as governesses, that we may not only be enabled to support ourselves, but likewise contribute to the comfort of our remaining parent, and the maintenance and education of a

sister, who is yet but a child. Under such circumstances, emolument is of more consequence to me even than an agreeable situation, though it is absolutely requisite that I should be well assured of its respectability."

The gentleman remained silent for some moments, covering his face with one hand; on removing it, as Maria became more accustomed to the gloom of the apartment they were in, she was enabled to distinguish the outline of his features, which appeared fine and commanding, though strongly impressed by a melancholy and somewhat stern character, whilst the expression around the mouth corresponded with his bearing, and gave an idea of great pride and haughtiness.

"You are aware, young lady," said he, "from the nature of the advertisement, that there are some unpleasant circumstances attending the situation offered to your acceptance; they are not only unpleasant, but of so peculiar a nature that they cannot be explained to you, ere you

accept it—whether you may from that cause decide upon refusing it, I know not; the advantages to be derived are two hundred a year whilst you retain it, and at the termination of your engagement, comprising such a number of years as may ultimately be agreed upon, a provision for life."

"Surely," replied Maria, "there cannot be any situation of respectability which I would refuse, with such great pecuniary advantages, since by them I should be enabled to do all for my dear mother that she would in her present humble abode require."

The stranger remained silent.

"May I ask," said Maria, "what would be required of me?"

"Certainly; it would be requisite that you should give up all communication with the world and with your family, for three years."

"Personal communication of course you mean?"

I mean that it is necessary there should be

a total cessation of every kind of intercourse between you and your friends; you must not during a period of three years write a letter, no one must know where you are except myself, and the lady whose companion you will be; by day you must be invisible, your journeys and your exercise must all be taken at night. The unfortunate lady with whom you will reside is not at present able to remain long in any place, and there are some melancholy and distressing circumstances attending her, which make it of the highest importance that the remainder of her life should be spent in privacy. Two respectable and confidential servants will be your attendants, a man and maid; every luxury that may be enjoyed under such restrictions will be yours. I will take care that letters are sent to you by means of a banker, and through the same source your family shall be informed of your health, at stated times. If at the expiration of three years, you wish to resign your situation, you shall receive five

hundred pounds in addition to your salary; or if you wish to visit your friends at that time you shall do so, and still take with you the five hundred pounds, and whilst you remain with my —— that is, with Lady ——with the lady, I mean, you shall receive five hundred pounds every three years, besides your salary; and at her death, should it take place during your residence with her, one hundred per annum for life; but you must take an oath never to relate to any human being, without my express leave, any circumstance that you hear or see, or any thing you yourself do, during the time of your absence."

As the stranger proceeded, Maria became pale and agitated, and when he concluded, she clasped her hands together in agony, exclaiming, "Oh! I cannot, indeed I cannot, I must not, accede to your proposal."

"I will not urge you, my dear young lady; you must judge for yourself, whether the advantages will be such as to compensate you

for the deprivations you must undergo; to a young lady who appeared anxious to assist a bereaved parent, I thought they might be esteemed fully equivalent; of course, were the situation of companion unattended by privations of any kind, I should not propose such liberal terms."

"I am indeed," replied the agitated Maria, "most anxious to assist my beloved mother; no personal sacrifice would appear too great, were I sure that—" she stopped, fearful of proceeding.

"What, madam?" asked the stranger coldly.

"Were I sure that there is no other objection to the situation you have done me the honour to offer."

"I will not say there is no other objection, Miss Harley, but I can assure you, on the honour of a man, whose word has never been doubted, that the being for whom I would gladly gain so amiable a companion, is pure as yourself in word and deed, and that you may

be satisfied your fair fame will be as immaculate when you quit her, as if you had resided under the roof of your own parent all the time; I will say no more to you, consider the advantages and disadvantages of my proposal, consult your friends, and decide accordingly; in three days I must have your decision, and should it be favourable, I trust that you will join my——the lady without delay."

The stranger then rising, Maria did the same, saying, "May I inquire the name of the gentleman I have the honour of addressing?"

"The name you may address me by is Glanville;" then bowing, he wished Maria a good morning; and as the servant, for whom he had rung, stood with the folding door open, for her to depart, she with trembling steps rejoined Mrs. Jones, who was anxiously waiting for her. They hastened to quit the house, and as speedily as possible entered a coach, when Maria narrated all that had occurred to her astonished friend, who, totally unable to ac-

count for such extraordinary conduct on the part of Mr. Glanville, knew not what plan to advise her weeping companion to pursue.

On arriving at home, Maria made Mr. Jones acquainted with all that had passed between herself and the stranger; her kind-hearted, though not very refined relative, heard her with astonishment, until she had stated all the restrictions proposed by Mr. Glanville, when, suddenly starting from his seat, he exclaimed, "The pig-faced lady, by Jove!"

Maria in unfeigned surprise requested to know his meaning; to which he replied, with a knowing nod, "When your story is finished, I will tell you all about her." Maria then more calmly finished her recital, and Mr. Jones prepared to perform his part of the engagement, by taking out of a drawer numerous scraps of newspaper, which he had cut out at different periods, and which contained, as he said, many extraordinary anecdotes. After selecting those which he considered applicable to the present

case, he gravely commenced:—"It has been long generally believed, my good young cousin, that a great many years ago, perhaps more than twenty, a baby was born in a noble family, with the head of a pig and the body of a female; if it was so, it was a monster, and should have been destroyed as such, but on the birth of a child, a great estate would be kept from a remote branch of the family, with whom the father of this unfortunate baby was not upon terms, so the creature was kept alive, and lived to be a full grown woman, or monster, but her appearance is said to be so revolting (and as she can only express her wishes in a kind of noise between speaking and grunting, although in full possession of the intellects and feelings of a human being), it has been very difficult to procure any one to live with her; many have tried, it is said, but none could remain."

"And do you, my dear sir, believe this wonderful story?"

For a moment Mr. Jones's little gray eyes twinkled, and a suppressed smile played round his mouth, "Why, as for believing," said he, "how can one do otherwise, with such paragraphs as these in one's hands—listen:

"'THE PIG-FACED LADY.—A chariot and four, with two outriders, passed through this place, at ten o'clock last night; there were two servants out of livery on the box, a bloody hand was observed on the armorial bearings, and the blinds were closely drawn. When to these singular circumstances we add, that the servants were strangely mysterious with regard to the name of their master, whence they came, and whither they were going, it can scarcely admit of a doubt, we think, that the unfortunate *pig-faced lady* was the occupant of the carriage, since it is fully ascertained that she is the daughter of a baronet, and usually travels at night thus attended.'

"Or," continued Mr. Jones, taking up another scrap of newspaper:

"'It is believed that the *pig-faced lady* is at present a resident in this city; she does not appear in the day, but walks out at dusk, closely veiled, attended by a female companion, and followed by a man out of livery; it has been positively ascertained that the *pig-faced lady* is the daughter of a noble duke, but we must beg to decline giving up the source of our information, although our readers may depend upon its accuracy, as likewise our belief that the lady is at present in private lodgings here.'

"Don't interrupt me yet, my dear," continued Mr. Jones, "I must read this to you, and if it does not convince you of the truth of the story, nothing will do so, but actually seeing the lady herself, I believe:—"

"'It is rumoured that the *pig-faced lady* is at present in the metropolis, in consequence of a match being in contemplation between her and a certain noble lord, who has more rank than wit, and less money than either; we do not doubt that there are many in an equally elevated station, who would marry any thing, however revolting, provided the pill were well gilded; and when we reflect how many descendants from the ancient nobility have lately suffered their hitherto pure streams, to be mingled with those of the vilest dregs of the people, we cannot express so great a horror at this reported matrimonial project as some of our contemporaries, who have seen these *més-alliances* take place with a sensation of pleasure, that the aristocracy of the land were using every endeavour, by so doing, to bring themselves into contempt.'

"It may be doubted whether the last para-

graph was not printed as a sly hit against some of the nobility, who had married women of infamous character about that time, rather than as repeating what they believed to be a fact. Whether that be so or not we cannot say; but," and as Mr. Jones spoke, he held several pieces of newspaper towards Maria, "all these relate to the same lady; now although I kept them, it was as doing credit to the wonder-maker's ingenuity, and not from any belief in the tale until now."

"Surely, my dear sir," said Maria, smiling faintly, "you do not *now* believe it, nor for an instant suppose the lady who wants a companion to be the individual pointed out, supposing such a thing possible."

"As for what is possible, it is not for you or me to say any thing is not possible; but, to change the subject, what are your intentions—will you accept the lucrative situation offered you?"

"I do not think I can; I fear to bind my-

self by a solemn promise not to mention what may occur."

"Why should you be afraid—don't you know if you see any thing wicked or unlawful done, your promise is no longer binding?"—Maria shook her head.—"Well then, if you are so very particular, make that reservation."

In an instant Maria's countenance brightened, but as quickly that sunny look faded away, and heaving a deep sigh, she said, "Were there not some strange unaccountable mystery, such terms would not be proposed."

"To be sure not," replied Mr. Jones. "Now hearken to what I say: You are a kind-hearted good girl, anxious to assist your mother and sister by the labour of your head, since your pretty little hands can't do much. The old citizen's wife wants a governess; she is too vulgar, and her children too rude for you to undertake. The fashionable and great Countess of G— wishes you to educate her daughter, but she expects you to perform impossibilities,

and you decline it; in short, for it is useless to enumerate them, you have met with insurmountable objections to every situation that has been offered. I do not blame you; there were objections, strong objections to them all; but when you have lived as long in the world as I have done, you will discover that the road of life is always strewed with thorns. You want money:—now, my good girl, that is not so easy to procure as young folks are apt to imagine. Whether we earn our bread by manual labour, by the exercise of any talents with which we may be endowed, or by bearing patiently things that may be disagreeable to us, it comes pretty nearly to the same thing in the end; we have all our trials; my Mary and I," looking fondly at his amiable wife, "have had ours; we struggled through years of comparative poverty, hoping by our exertions to be able to bring up our children respectably; it pleased God to reward our endeavours with success; it likewise pleased him to take our two dear children from

us, just as they were becoming young women: the stroke was severe, but we bore it, I hope, like Christians. Now if you could be happy to live with such humble people as we are, and be to my wife as a daughter," brushing the starting tear from his honest eye, "and your mother would condescend to receive a little annuity from me, why then you need inquire no more about Mr. Glanville's."

Maria, overpowered with emotion, could scarcely command words to thank the kind-hearted Mr. Jones; his gentle partner looked imploringly at her, but was too much agitated to speak, when Maria threw her arms around Mrs. Jones's neck, and relieved her full heart by a flood of tears. Then rising she said, "To-morrow we will resume the subject with which we commenced this conversation, I shall be better able to judge how I ought to act after a night's reflection."

Ere the hour of decision had arrived, Maria received a letter from Mrs. Harley, expressing

her gratitude to Heaven for bestowing upon her such a daughter. Ellen, she said, had been alarmingly ill, and but for the medical aid they had been able, in consequence of Maria's remittance to gain for her, she must have been lost, as the apothecary who had attended her had resigned all hope, and declined doing any thing more. Upon the arrival of Dr. Z——, he said, although her state was precarious, with instant attention it was far from hopeless: so it had happily proved, and the sweet child was out of danger, and informed by whose aid she had been saved; for so little hope did her grieving parent think there remained of her recovery, that she had not for an instant considered herself justified in calling in the eminent Dr. Z—— until Maria's unexpected large remittance arrived. Mrs. Harley added her earnest prayer that her daughter might soon meet with an eligible engagement in town, as she feared there was not the remotest chance of one in Lancashire, every body expressing objection to take into their house a

young lady whom they imagined so highly brought up as the daughters of Mr. Harley must have been.

Maria had no sooner read her mother's letter than she placed herself at her writing-desk, and in a few minutes despatched the following note to Mr. Glanville.

"Miss Harley informs Mr. Glanville that she has determined to accept the situation he offers, provided she is allowed to make a reservation, that should she see or hear any thing inimical to virtue or honour, she shall not be bound to keep it secret, nor to remain with the lady to whom she is to be companion."

To this Maria received the following reply:

"Mr. Glanville gladly accedes to Miss Harley's proposal, and hopes she will be ready to commence her engagement on the appointed day."

When Maria informed her friends of the steps she had taken, Mr. Jones gave her great credit for having acted thus, since she was determined not to accede to his wish that she should

remain with them. Mrs. Jones expressed a fear that Miss Harley had acted with precipitation in an affair of so much importance to her future comfort. But Mr. Jones saying, "I think, my dear, nothing is so likely to contribute to the future comfort and happiness of Miss Harley, as the certainty of being able to confirm that of her exemplary parent; I have too high an opinion of her to believe that she will suffer any trifling inconveniences she may feel in her own person, to weigh against the pleasure of performing such a duty."

Mrs. Jones acquiesced, since she had always found that the plain sense of her worthy husband caused him to form a more correct judgment than in some cases her own more delicate notions would at first admit. Although Maria had resolution to accept a situation which offered such great privations to counterbalance the pecuniary advantages, she had not attained sufficient self-command to enable her to do so without evincing, by the dejection of her

manner, how much she suffered. When retired to her own apartment for the night, she sought for consolation and support in supplications to that Being who was alone enabled to bestow it. Her mind, composed by prayer and by the conviction that the sacrifice she purposed making of her own happiness, would contribute greatly to the comfort of those so dear to her, she sunk into a tranquil sleep; and though she was unable to obtain repose until a late hour, it was then so sound that she arose the following morning more refreshed and invigorated than she had felt for some time previous.

Mr. Jones, without saying any thing on the subject to Miss Harley or his wife, had made many inquiries in the neighbourhood of Portman-square, respecting Mr. Glanville's family; from the answers he received, he was somewhat staggered in his former opinion of the "pig-faced lady" being entirely a fictitious story, as the few people from whom he could learn any thing seemed of opinion that she was actually

under Mr. Glanville's roof. One informant even went so far as to state that a friend of his had followed this lady, who walked out only in the dusk, and being unable to get a glimpse of her face through her thick veil, had, in passing a lamp, pretended to get entangled accidentally with her veil; when he supposed the horror of the sight must have frightened him, as he remembers nothing more until he arose from the ground, as if he had been in a swoon, and seeing no one near him, returned quietly home; but Mr. Jones's informer added, "as my friend had rather a considerable lump on his head, I suspected the brawny arm of a Scotch servant who followed her, had prevented his curiosity being gratified, though he is himself of a different opinion."

Mr. Jones's good sense would not allow him to place credence in the suspicions of the neighbourhood, at the same time he could not entirely overcome the doubts which had arisen in his mind; but since he was not able to obtain

any satisfactory information, he resolved not to mention to the ladies that he had made any inquiries on this mysterious subject.

The morning having arrived on which Maria was to enter upon her new situation, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, she proceeded to York-street. On their arrival, they were shown into the same apartment they had before been in, when the servant requested Maria to follow him into the adjoining one. She did so, but instead of finding Mr. Glanville seated there as formerly, she was ushered into a third room, which she found darkened as before, and in which a gentleman was seated whose features she could not distinguish in the gloom with which he was surrounded. But the full, sonorous voice of the stranger could not be mistaken, as he welcomed her; adding, as a gleam of light from the opening door at which she entered fell upon her pale cheek, "I am sorry to see you look so unwell; if you repent having entered into this engagement, much as it will

grieve me, I would wish you to retract before we proceed further."

"I thank you, sir," she replied, mournfully, "but my resolution is unaltered; my mother is in distress, and I will make any sacrifice consistent with honour to relieve her. You have assured me nothing will be required of me incompatible with the strictest propriety: although a stranger to me, I believe you to be a gentleman; consequently, that your word may be relied on; for surely no one could be so base as to cause an orphan daughter's affection for her mother to lead to her own destruction."

The stranger for a moment appeared to shake with emotion; then by a powerful effort resuming his calmness of demeanour, "Miss Harley, you are right; none but a villain could injure such innocence and purity. I am not a villain; and I again repeat that the being with whom you will be associated, is pure as yourself. She is to be pitied and not blamed—more I cannot now say. Your friends must hear us enter into

an agreement, which I trust you will have no reason to regret having done."

Then ringing the bell, the servant was sent to request Mr. and Mrs. Jones to enter. For a moment they started at the gloominess of the apartment, which was somewhat lessened to Maria, as her eye had become more accustomed to it. The stranger, turning his back upon the very little light that was admitted, whilst he still further shaded his face with his hand, addressed them thus: "I have requested your company, that you may hear the agreement which this young lady and myself enter into, and see that the salary, and other sums she is to receive, are legally secured to her. That paper, sir, you will perceive, when in a stronger light, is an agreement to pay Miss Harley two hundred pounds per annum, for three years; and five hundred pounds at the expiration of that period, should she remain that time with the lady to whom she is going to be companion. Should she relinquish the situation before that

time is expired, the engagement on both sides ceases; excepting that she must for ever remain bound by her oath of secrecy. Should she, on the contrary, at the termination of the above period, wish to remain in her office, the same salary will be continued, and five hundred pounds additional paid at the end of every three years which she remains."

The stranger ceased speaking, and Mr. Jones deeming it incumbent upon him to answer, said, "Miss Harley's friends, I doubt not, will be fully satisfied with your liberality, sir; but as I am the only relation the young lady has in London, I hope you won't deem it amiss, that I say I should like to have some reference—"

Here Mr. Jones was interrupted by the stranger saying, haughtily, "That I have already told Miss Harley, is quite impossible. Were that desirable, or indeed could it be allowed with propriety by me, there would no longer be a cause for a salary so disproportioned to the duties of the office; which, although

singular, and with some unpleasant restrictions, would scarcely require so great a pecuniary sacrifice, could a reference be given respecting the character of myself, or the lady. This I can assure you, that I shall not intrude upon their society, unless sent for in any case of emergency, nor will any individual whatever. Now, madam, I must request your solemn promise, that whilst residing with the lady who is under my protection, you will neither directly nor indirectly write or cause any letter to be written to any individual whatever, with the exception of such intimations as I may permit from time to time, to inform your friends of your welfare, and which shall pass through my hands; likewise that you will not, at any period of your life, give the slightest hint of who or what your companion may be, of who I am, should accident discover it, or of any circumstance which may occur during your residence with —— with the unfortunate lady to whom you will be a companion."

"I most solemnly promise to adhere strictly to all you have said," replied Maria, in faltering accents.

"Enough; I have had an opportunity of hearing your character, and likewise that of this worthy gentleman, your relative; for, prepossessing as are your countenance and manners, I durst not, in a case of so much importance to the unfortunate lady, with whom you are to reside, trust only to such evidence. Now, sir, take those papers, keep them for Miss Harley; you will perceive them to be signed by George Glanville, and if you inquire at A—'s bank, you will find a sum lodged there to defray these demands. I will now wish you good morning." Then ringing the bell without rising, Mr. and Mrs. Jones could not avoid taking the hint to depart, and Maria accompanied them into the front drawing-room, when quite overpowered by her feelings, she burst into tears, and clung to Mrs. Jones, who had been struck with such awe, by the stranger's haughty carriage, and

the gloominess of the apartment in which they had been received, in addition to the mystery of the whole affair, that she had not uttered a word during the whole interview. She now affectionately embraced the weeping girl, and besought her to resign this very mysterious situation, and return home with them.

Mrs. Jones's tears mingling with Maria's as she spoke, roused her to the necessity of exertion. "Forgive me, my kind friends," said she, "for all the trouble I have occasioned you; I will endeavour to deserve your good opinion by my conduct, and from this moment will strive to shake off all the fears and suspicions which have environed me; I feel that the Almighty Father of all will protect my orphan state, and restore me with credit and happiness to my widowed parent; now leave me, my friends, I wish not to appear too fearful of entering upon my office."

Mr. and Mrs. Jones then took an affectionate leave of their young relative, assuring her they

would call the following morning, in the hope of being permitted to see her, though in case they should not, they would bring with them a letter for her perusal, with such information as they should receive at A—'s bank, where Mr. J. immediately proceeded.

On the arrival of the latter at the bank, he requested to speak in private with the principal partner, who, in answer to his inquiries, said, that a gentleman calling himself Glanville, had placed in their hands the preceding day, a considerable sum of money, with an order to pay to the appointment of Maria Harley, two hundred per annum, and a further sum of five hundred pounds, at the expiration of three years from that time; who the gentleman was, or whence he came, Mr. A— was perfectly ignorant; neither did he know whether Mr. Glanville himself left the money at his bank, or employed some person to transact the business.

The following morning, Mr. and Mrs. Jones,

according to their promise, proceeded to York Street, in the hope of being permitted again to see Maria; but, on their arrival, they were disappointed to perceive every symptom of the family having already departed, which they found to be the case, from a woman who was cleaning the house. Mr. Jones inquired at what time they went away.

"Last night, I believe, sir, about ten o'clock, but I will call up the servant of the house, who can tell you all particulars."

This Mr. and Mrs. Jones readily assented to, in the hope of learning something more of the strange person with whom their favourite young friend was to reside. The cook who lived in the house told Mr. Jones that the two ladies, attended by the man and lady's maid, set out in a carriage and four at ten o'clock the preceding evening, and the gentleman went alone in a postchaise about half an hour afterwards.

"Have you ever seen the lady," said Mr. Jones, "in whose service you have been?"

"Never, sir; nor have I ever seen the gentleman, except by peeping out at the kitchen window, and then it was quite in the dusk; and he always wore his neckcloth so high, and his hat slouched over his face, and such a big upper coat, that I could see but little of him: the lady, too, walked out in the evening with such a large cloak and thick veil, that if I was to be hung for it, I could not tell whether she is young or old, a blackamoor or a white person; but people about here say she is neither."

"What do they say of her?" said Mrs. Jones, faintly smiling.

"Why, ma'am, they say she has the face of a pig and the body of a woman."

"But you do not believe such nonsense, my good woman?" said Mr. Jones, rather inquiringly, than condemning such belief.

"I don't know whether such things be possible, sir; poor people like me don't understand these things; some say the lady eats out of a silver trough, but I never saw any thing of the

kind; her maid always took her dinner into her room, which was very like the dinner of any other Christian; it was taken from Mr. Glanville's table, for she never left her room, and from something I overheard the man and maid say to the other, the housemaid and me thought they never saw each other at all."

"How very extraordinary!" said Mr. Jones, musing.

"Very, sir; would you like to see the house, as it is to be let?"

Mrs. Jones thought this was a hint for their departure; but in the hope that something might be elicited in further conversation which might give them more insight into Mr. Glanville's or the *incognita's* character, she proposed to her husband accepting the woman's proposal. On entering the room which they were told was occupied by the lady, Mrs. Jones said, "You no doubt heard her conversing with her maid sometimes as you past her door?"

"Never, ma'am; I sometimes heard an odd sort

of moaning noise, whether it was, as the neighbours said, grunting, or only sobbing and moaning like, I can't say; but I never heard her speak, and I did (you know it was quite natural) listen sometimes. Once I heard a deep sigh—so deep that it frightened me; it did not sound like a proper earthly sigh."

"Did you see Miss Harley before they went?"

"Is that the name of the pretty young lady that the servants said was to go with them?"

"Yes, it is indeed."

"Why, I saw her, and I did not see her, as one may say; for though I stood on the stairs and peeped, the lady's maid, who is very proud and saucy, told me to keep back, so I only just peeped at her, but I saw she looked pale and melancholy, and no wonder; I would not go with such people if they offered me ever so much gold."

Mr. and Mrs. Jones finding they could hear nothing of importance from the talkative servant, soon left her with full hearts. For weeks

and months afterwards, the virtue, accomplishments, and beauty, of Maria Harley, with the extraordinary circumstances attending her situation, formed their most frequent topic of conversation when they were alone. With anxious solicitude, Mr. Jones called at A—'s bank, conformably with the orders he had received from Maria, for her first quarter's salary, the whole of which she appropriated to the use of her mother. With inexpressible pleasure he perceived at the same time a letter, the second he had so received, directed to Mrs. Harley, in the writing of her daughter, which he forwarded to her as more valuable than the check which it accompanied. With mingled pain and pleasure, Mr. and Mrs. Jones heard from Mrs. Harley that all her daughter's letter contained were the words, "I am in good health, dearest mother."

Anxiety respecting Maria preyed severely upon the health and spirits of her exemplary parent: how often did she say, that whilst blessed with the certainty that her children were not

only in health, but as happy as their limited circumstances would admit, she could bear all the privations of her situation without a murmur; but to be not only deprived of the society of her beloved Maria, but to be in doubt as to where she was, with whom she resided, whether she was happy or the reverse—this trial was too severe for the heart of a mother to bear without repining.

Mrs. Harley had received no intimation from her daughter respecting the situation she had in view, until she had actually engaged in it; when a letter, left in the hands of Mr. Jones, had been despatched with those particulars which have been already related, though they were stated in the most favourable manner which a regard to truth would admit of, whilst she passed over in silence such minute circumstances as were more likely to alarm than quiet the feelings of a parent. Maria well knew her mother's strong affection for her children, and that she would rather undergo any personal

sufferings than that they should be uncomfortable; consequently, she judged it prudent, when once resolved on the mode of conduct it was right for her to pursue, to put it out of her own power to recant, ere her determination was announced to Mrs. Harley.

As Mr. Glanville had assented to Maria's receiving letters from her friends, although she was not permitted to answer them, her mother and sisters wrote to her frequently, addressing all their despatches under cover to Mr. Glanville, at A—'s bank, which letters were called for monthly. In vain did Mrs. Harley and her daughters entreat Maria to return to them, and not for their sake allow the emolument offered her to detain her from them. Every argument that the strongest affection could urge was made use of by Mrs. Harley, excepting that all-powerful one of her health sinking under the anxiety she suffered; and that she would not use, lest her daughter should be utterly unable to quit the situation she was en-

gaged in, and consequently be made uneasy without any advantage being gained.

Deeply as Mrs. Harley felt the mysterious absence and silence of her daughter, time and custom lessened the poignancy of her grief, and when at the end of twelve months, in addition to the words "I am well," in Maria's letter, was perceived, "and happy as I can be at a distance from my dearest mother and sisters," Mrs. Harley in deep-felt gratitude returned thanks for such blessed tidings, and resolved no longer to doubt that her amiable daughter would meet with the protection she so well deserved.

As Mrs. Harley received regularly from A—'s bank one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, she was not only enabled to live comfortably in her little cottage, but to give her youngest daughter the advantage of masters in those accomplishments in which she was not able herself to instruct her, as it was desirable that Ellen should be educated in such a way as to empower her to gain a livelihood hereafter as

her sisters then did. The gentleman with whom Harriet resided in the double quality of companion to his wife and instructress of his children, had engaged as a curate a young man of respectable family, agreeable person, and gentlemanly manners, of the name of Ormsbey. His father, a naval officer on half pay, had expended all that he had the power of bestowing upon his son on his college education; as the small fortune which remained must, he said, at his death be equally divided between his daughters: thus, at twenty-three years of age, Harry Ormsbey was literally turned into the world with fifty pounds in his pocket. Captain Ormsbey had resided during several years within a mile of Belle Vue House, and Mrs. Harley had gladly bestowed upon himself and family many of those little attentions which those in affluence have an opportunity of conferring without wounding the feelings of their less fortunate friends. If Captain Ormsbey was laid up with the gout, his table was rarely without game,

pine-apples, grapes, or some other delicacy from Belle Vue; and the young people were frequent visiters there.

Harry Ormsbey had long been attached to Harriet, but the idea of paying his addresses to the daughter of the wealthy Mr. Harley never for one moment could be encouraged. When, however, Mr. Harley died insolvent, Harry no longer saw any insurmountable obstacle to his doing so; and as through the interest of a friend he procured a curacy, in a situation which would give him an opportunity of endeavouring to gain her affections, he looked forward with anxious hope to succeeding in his disinterested efforts. Two young persons who had been formerly acquainted, thrown together as Mr. Ormsbey and Harriet were, would probably soon have formed a mutual attachment, had there not been one on either side before: it was therefore no wonder that Ormsbey soon succeeded in his wish of obtaining from Harriet an acknowledgment, that she not only heard

his expressions of affection without displeasure, but that she returned that affection fully. When the young curate asked Mrs. Harley's consent to a union, she answered him, that assured of his innate worth, and his sincere attachment to Harriet, she would consent to their marriage as soon as there was the least prospect of their being able to live in the most frugal manner, as she had herself never been happier than when her husband was in possession of a very small fortune; but that Mr. Ormsbey must be possessed of a living, or, at any rate, a good curacy, before they thought of it; and then if Harriet, by her own industry and economy, could add one hundred pounds to one which she should give her, she would no longer oppose their happiness.

Although the young people would willingly have married without this delay, they acknowledged the propriety of Mrs. Harley's decision, and readily submitted to it. Once a year Harriet always spent a month at her mother's,

when the latter would frequently say, that she wanted but Maria at home to be again perfectly happy; for although when she saw the graceful form of Harriet assisting the youthful Ellen in some of her household occupations she could not always prevent a sigh escaping at the altered prospects of her children, she was so thoroughly convinced that great wealth confers but little happiness on those who possess it, that she thought, could she but see them placed above the reach of want, she should cease to regret the loss of that fortune which they were so well able to do without.

Mrs. Harley's cottage, under the superintendence of neatness, industry, and taste, was become a little paradise; as it had a southern aspect, and was protected from continued frosts by its vicinity to the sea, a variety of beautiful creeping plants quickly covered the rough stone of which it was composed, whilst the windows filled with myrtles and geraniums, and the little garden in front gay with a rich assemblage of

flowers, cultivated by Ellen, attracted the eye of the passing stranger, and many travellers heard of the misfortunes of its occupants, who were first led to inquire to whom this *humble* yet *tasteful* residence belonged, from the rare combination of two such qualities as humility and good taste.

Three years had elapsed since Maria entered upon her situation in Mr. Glanville's family. The time had arrived when her mother fondly looked forward to seeing her once more under her own roof. A letter arrived from the banker's; it contained only the usual words, "I am well." Mrs. Harley knew not, until that moment, how anxiously she had looked forward to the termination of the first three years, in the hope of again embracing her beloved Maria. When she did not arrive, and no hint of her intended return was given, her mother sunk under the disappointment, sleep forsook her eyes, fearful imaginations were constantly before her—some dreadful fate she was sure must have befallen

her daughter, or she would have returned; perhaps those letters were forged—she might be murdered! There was no possibility of arguing or reasoning on the subject, when so little was positively known; and Mrs. Harley found that all her usually lively Ellen could do to comfort her, was to sit and weep by her side.

At this time Henry Ormsbey had the perpetual curacy of B— (the parish in which Mrs. Harley resided) offered to him. The emolument being a hundred per annum, whilst that of the one he before possessed was only half that sum, he immediately accepted it, in the hope that Mrs. Harley would no longer oppose his union with Harriet; and she feeling, as she did, that her strength was rapidly declining, gave her consent, although Harriet had not been able to perform her part of the engagement, but what was deficient Mrs. Harley resolved to make good, since she was anxious that one daughter should be settled, and the other be in possession of a respectable home in case of her death, which she

judged to be not far distant, both of which would be accomplished by Harriet's marriage, since she was sure the amiable Ormsbey would never allow the sister of his wife to want a home which he had the power of bestowing. Under these circumstances, therefore, Harriet gladly resigned her situation; and Mrs. Harley, in having once more the society of her second daughter, endeavoured to bear her continued anxiety respecting Maria with more fortitude than she had hitherto done; added to which, her mind was so much occupied in making all the little arrangements necessary for Harriet's marriage, in such a manner as to combine comfort with the most extreme economy, that her health and spirits improved to such a degree as to cause her to accuse herself of precipitation in having acceded to Ormsbey's wish for a speedy union; but having done so, she would not disappoint him by recalling that consent, although prudence whispered, that should her life be spared, it would be better they should remain

single a few more years. Ellen delighted to see Harriet at home again, and likewise her mother's improved health, entered, with all the spirit and pleasure natural to her age, into the plans formed by Henry Ormsbey and her sister, for their future happiness.

The day soon arrived on which the young couple were to be united—no equipages—no elegant dresses—no bride favours—no splendid festivities, have I to describe. The sun shone bright, the air was clear and frosty, and the landscape around appeared to have put on its bridal array, for a hoar frost glittered like diamonds upon every tree and shrub in the vicinity of B—, when Harriet, attended by the two Miss Ormsbeys, and her sister Ellen, walked to the parish church, which was situated about two hundred yards from the cottage. Captain Ormsbey gave the bride away, and no sooner was the ceremony concluded, than the young couple returned to Mrs. Harley's to spend the day, where Captain Ormsbey and his daughters

joined them at dinner, Mrs. Harley having regained strength sufficiently to be enabled to receive the little wedding-party.

In the evening, as Ellen presided with youthful merriment at the tea-table, a carriage was heard to stop in front of the cottage. Carriages but rarely visited at Mrs. Harley's; for, with very few exceptions, her numerous opulent acquaintance had one by one ceased to visit her, and in so doing had ceased to recollec that she, of whose acquaintance they once were proud, still existed. A carriage stopping at the cottage at so unusual an hour, therefore, under such circumstances, caused surprise in all the party: but in Mrs. Harley it did more; for a species of nervous agitation was evident, which was not difficult to account for in the mother of one who had been long and anxiously expected. The step of the carriage was heard to be let down — the door-bell rung—all listened in breathless expectation—not a word was spoken, not a finger moved. The door of the room

opened, and in an instant Maria Harley was in her mother's arms, who, holding her firmly to her breast, laughed and cried hysterically, as she repeatedly kissed the ivory forehead of her child.

To describe the delight, the confusion that ensued, would be impossible; only those who have unexpectedly received a dearly beloved child, after a long and painful absence, can conceive it. The Ormsbeys, although very old acquaintances, Maria regretted to find with her mother on her return to her beloved home.

"How Ellen is improved!" said she, smiling at the lovely girl, "I should scarcely have known her; and Harriet looks remarkably well, too."

"Oh!" replied Ellen, laughing, "Harriet ought to look well; this is her wedding-day you know, dearest Maria."

But Maria did not know; and a train of inquiries and congratulations followed this inti-

mation. She had, she said, felt anxious to arrive in time for her sister's marriage, since she had received the letter written by Harriet, to inform her it was likely soon to take place; but from a variety of causes, it had been impossible for her to come before that day; yet she thought she should have been in time to attend the wedding, as Harriet had not intimated so very early a period being in agitation for its celebration.

Harriet, blushing, acknowledged that Mr. Ormsbey had prevailed upon her to fix an earlier day than that on which she had at first intended the event to take place.

Maria's return, unexpected as it was at that moment, was to Mrs. Harley like a draught of the elixir of life, her health and spirits seemed so entirely renovated by her arrival. She had scarcely dared to hope that she should again see all her children around her, but since this happiness, which she had hitherto only fearfully anticipated rather than expected, had

really befallen her, she felt that she could alone show her gratitude, by offering up her fervent thanksgivings to the throne of mercy, for the blessing vouchsafed to her, and, having done so, her head that night sunk upon her pillow, with a calm consciousness of felicity, to which she had long been a stranger, and although the scenes and events of the day drove sleep from her eyelids, the happy frame of her mind caused her very watchfulness to be more refreshing than the uneasy slumbers, which, for a length of time, had been her only sleep.

The day following Maria's return, her friends perceived, what did not at first strike them, owing to the agitation attendant upon their meeting, the great alteration which had taken place in her appearance, since they had last beheld her. Her elegant figure, though slight, and inclining to tall, was then plump, whilst in addition to features more than usually regular and beautiful, her loveliness was much in-

creased by the brilliance of her complexion, and fascination of her ever-varying and smiling countenance; she had now lost every trace of having ever been, in the slightest degree, *en bon point;* her complexion no longer vied with the rose, the lily had usurped its place, and the smile of gaiety, which formerly hovered round her coral lips, had fled to be replaced by one so gentle, so sweet, and yet so mournful, that whilst it fascinated as much as ever, it led those who beheld it, to regret, that one so lovely, so young, and so beloved, should have known suffering deep enough, to alter so entirely her natural cast of countenance. Mrs. Harley, though grieved by her daughter's altered appearance, flattered herself that restoration to the society of her family, and to her native air, would soon renovate her health; and, in that hope, she herself daily regained her strength, though she still saw her beloved daughter pale and attenuated.

Mrs. Harley and her daughters, delighted by

Maria's return to B—, thought not of again parting with her; but when the former hinted this wish, she only mournfully shook her head; and when her young sister, Ellen, threw her arms around her neck, and pressed her own ruby lips to her sister's fair forehead, saying, "Dear, dear Maria, do not again quit us; or if you must go, let it be where we can sometimes see, and often hear from you."

Maria with difficulty withdrew herself from the ardent grasp of the affectionate girl, whilst, with an agitated countenance, she replied, "Tempt me not, my darling sister, I must leave you, and that but too soon."

"Surely, Maria, you cannot think of doing so; I have been bereft of your society nearly four years, you have now been only a fortnight with us, and do you already talk of quitting us?"

"My dearest mother," said Maria, tenderly, taking her hand, "I would never quit you again, could I remain with you, in accordance

with my own views of what is my duty; for your sake, and that of my sisters, I accepted the mysterious, but lucrative situation, which was offered me; had I not done so, it is probable, that for a length of time, I might have been a burden, rather than an assistance to you. I must acknowledge, that at the time I undertook the situation proposed, it was not without difficulty that I overcame my repugnance to it; no advantage, merely personal, could have induced me to make the attempt; but with the hope of contributing to your comfort, dear mother, I would willingly have made much greater sacrifices than any that were required of me. All my expectations have been fulfilled; I have brought with me a sum of money, which, I trust, will not only repay you what you have advanced to Harriet, but enable you to procure many little comforts, or even luxuries, which your state of health makes requisite. I am grateful for the liberality of those with whom I have resided; I am still

more grateful for the kindness with which I have been treated; and the best requital that I can make, is by returning myself, according to my engagement. The time for which I came here will soon elapse, and I trust you will see me depart without grief, since assured that where I go, I shall meet with every indulgence that even you can wish me to receive."

As Maria spoke, she placed in her mother's hands a bill for five hundred pounds, who tearfully replied, "Keep it, dearest Maria, you have already been but too generous to us, and it is desirable you should now gain an independence for yourself. I trust, my child, some one may be met with worthy of you in future years, and the sum which you now so generously destine for your sister, may form a part of your own marriage portion."

Maria's pale cheeks were instantly tinged with a faint suffusion, and with trembling lips, she answered, "Never, my mother, I shall never marry; for you alone I wished to earn

this: where I am going, I shall receive more than sufficient for all my wants!"

"Maria," said Mrs. Harley, "you say you must soon again quit me, I have hitherto in vain expressed a wish to learn with whom and where you have been living; you tell me you are bound by an oath, or at least a solemn promise, not to reveal it. No promise can absolve a child from obedience to a parent; I, your sole parent, *command* you to inform me of the name and situation of the lady with whom you have resided during your absence from me; you were under age when you entered into this engagement, without waiting for my consent; therefore, in no point of view, can it be binding!"

"Mother," replied Maria, gently, though firmly, "urge me not again on this topic; the promise I made was voluntary, I perfectly knew what I was doing; I weighed well its probable consequences ere I made it, but having done so, nothing can induce me to break it; on every subject but this, I will obey you impli-

citly, but on this, obedience is no longer in my power."

"Will you not then say a word to relieve my anxiety?"

"I cannot, indeed I cannot, consistently with the nature of my promise; do not, dearest mother, I beseech you, urge me to speak on a subject, which honour forbids me touching upon. Whether I did right in acting as I have done, I know not, but if I erred, that Almighty power, who alone sees the motive and the act, will, I trust, judge me mercifully."

As Maria thus spoke, her fine eyes were raised to heaven, and her quivering lips bespoke her inward agitation. Mrs. Harley looked with painful interest upon her daughter's countenance, and then with tearful eyes, said, "My poor Maria, it is not a trivial cause that has thus altered thy once blooming cheek and lively spirits, but whatever may be the cause, I *think* I need not doubt the virtue of my daughter."

As Maria heard and comprehended the import of these words, she arose from her seat, her figure seeming to dilate into almost awful majesty, and her fine eyes shooting forth glances of indignation, she exclaimed, "Do I hear my mother speak thus of her daughter—of Maria Harley? Am I then, after all I have sacrificed, doubted by that parent, for whose welfare I would resign my life, but not my honour?" Thus saying, she burst into an agony of tears, whilst Mrs. Harley, shocked and alarmed by her agitation, threw her arms around her daughter, and assuring her that she believed her pure as unsullied snow, mingled her tears with hers.

When Maria again recovered her composure, she said, "Never, dearest mother, speak thus again, if you wish me to retain my senses; I am not ignorant of the suspicions to which the peculiarity of my situation renders me liable: the insinuations of the Miss Ormsbeys, nay, sometimes even those of Harriet herself, have

been such as to give me pain, but nothing the world can say, will wound me deeply, whilst assured that I have the approbation and confidence of my dear mother: there I am indeed vulnerable; a word of doubt from you, though it could not shake my resolution to perform, in the strictest manner, the promise I have made, would render those trials, which have already been great, beyond my power to bear."

Mrs. Harley instantly assured her daughter, that so implicit was her reliance upon the propriety of her conduct, and her high principles, that she would not again ask for her confidence, since she was sure that all that was in her power to relate, would be confided to her voluntarily. Maria gratefully thanked her affectionate parent, and retired to compose her spirits, ere she joined her sister in a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbey.

In the evening the sisters were looking at some Italian views, lent them by Captain

Ormsbey, when Harriet observed that there was too much repose in some of the moonlight scenes, to be natural, even at that season of rest; for the cattle, the sky, the water, all looked not only unruffled, but as if they were immovable."

"That," replied Maria, "is the peculiar effect of the soft clear air of Italy; I have taken several sketches by moonlight from similar points, when not a leaf has moved, not a ripple could be seen or heard on the surface of the lake, and when not the slightest vapour could be discerned betwixt the earth and the deep blue vault of heaven."

"Then you have been in Italy, Maria?" said Harriet, looking at her sister with a glance of keen inquiry.

To this Maria made no reply, but slightly colouring, moved from the open *porte-feuille* towards the window, where, apparently fixing her attention upon a beautiful rose, she remained some minutes lost in thought.

Several things had occurred at different times, to lead Harriet and Ellen to suspect, that much of the time their sister had been absent, was spent abroad; her remark upon the Italian views confirmed that suspicion; but she shrunk from the slightest allusion to any thing of the kind, with such appearance of emotion, that no one ventured to question her further.

Maria's manners, although gentle and attractive, were somewhat dignified, and were particularly calculated to repel any undue liberty or familiarity; even the lively and ingenuous Ellen, who would sometimes throw her arms around her sister's neck, and with a hundred kisses, beg her to stay at B—, would in an instant become grave and silent, if Maria only looked her disapprobation; and the Miss Ormsbeys, who were what is termed showy young women, and accustomed to be admired, when in Maria's presence felt their usual self-confidence diminished, and their volubility repressed, by the quiet and easy dignity of her

manner, which, although kind and obliging, checked every attempt at familiarity.

The month which Maria had promised to spend with her friends had nearly elapsed, when one morning as she was seated at the pianoforte, a gentleman, who had been upon intimate terms with her father and old Mr. Danvers, called. It was the first time she had seen him since the melancholy change which had taken place in the circumstances of the two families. His entrance brought with it a train of affecting recollections, and as she held out her hand to welcome him, her trembling lips could scarcely utter the expected greeting. Mr. Morton had arrived at that stage of life when garrulity usually forms one of its chief pleasures: he talked much of days gone by; thoughtless of the feelings of those whom he addressed, he continually wounded them by reference to friends who were removed by death, and places which they should never see again.

"And poor Frederick, too," he said, after

having been a short time seated, "who could have supposed that fine young man would have been lost in his voyage to America? Ah! my dear Mrs. Harley, how little we thought of all these sad losses, when I used to sit at your hospitable board at Belle Vue; the old may expect to be removed, but I never thought that I should outlive the fine little fellow whom I used to dandle on my knees."

Maria, by the most strenuous exertions, had been enabled to listen with tolerable composure to Mr. Morton's conversation until then. It was the first time Frederick Danvers's name had been uttered in her hearing for years, and totally unable to command her feelings, she burst into a flood of tears, and instantly quitted the room.

Mr. Morton, quite innocent of any intention to give pain, expressed his regret at having been so unfortunate as to speak upon a subject which could wound the young lady's feelings; adding, that had he been aware there had ever

been any particular attachment between them, he should have used more caution.

"You are quite mistaken, my good friend," said Mrs. Harley; "Maria and Frederick had no attachment for each other beyond that of friendship and esteem, such as we all felt for the poor young man; but as she has been some years from us, it so happens that we have never spoken on this melancholy subject before her, whilst with us it has frequently been the topic of conversation, consequently she feels the allusion to it more keenly than I do."

Mrs. Harley spoke as she believed, for Maria had never confided her affection for Frederick to any one; she thought that by so doing she should only add to the distress of her parent, by letting her see the full extent of the sacrifice she had made; and when Harriet wrote to inform her that news had arrived of the loss of the ship in which Frederick had embarked for America, and that all on board had perished, she felt in the midst of her grief a melancholy kind of pleasure

that no one knew how deep was her cause for sorrow. Maria did not again appear during Mr. Morton's visit, but shortly after his departure she entered the sitting-room, with a face paler than usual, though with a manner tranquil and composed; and as Mrs. Harley and Ellen wished not to give her any pain it was possible to avoid, they made no allusion to any thing which had fallen from the lips of their loquacious old friend.

The day but too soon arrived in which Maria was to tear herself from the embrace of her mother and sisters; so much were they all affected at the thoughts of her departure, that she almost regretted that she had visited B——; yet she felt that the recollection of their happiness would be a solace to many a melancholy hour that she might spend far from them; and though Mrs. Harley might still pine for more frequent intercourse with her beloved child, the positive assurance she had received from herself of the comfort and respectability of the situa-

tion in which she was placed, would always be a source of happiness to her. Maria quitted B—— in a postchaise, unattended by any one; she requested her friends would not even inquire what direction she meant to take, as she was no less bound by duty than inclination to keep her route as secret as possible. Many days elapsed after the departure of Maria, ere Mrs. Harley could regain spirits sufficient to enable her to attend to her usual occupations; and Ellen, although in conformity with the wish of her mother, she omitted none of those studies or accomplishments which generally employed a great proportion of her time, felt so deeply the loss of her affectionate sister's company and instruction, that her hitherto smiling countenance was become grave and thoughtful.

As time wore away, the inhabitants of the cottage became more reconciled to the deprivation of Maria's society; and when, ere the end of a month, a letter in her hand was delivered to Mrs. Harley, in which she assured her of her

own health and happiness, and that, though her letters would not be dated, she should be enabled in future to write occasionally to all those who were so inestimably dear to her, the delighted parent resolved no longer to repine at what was so much for the advantage of her family. In three years Maria was again to return home, and accustomed as her friends had now become to the mysterious circumstances attending her situation, its peculiarity began to fade from the minds of Mrs. Harley and Ellen. The latter had notched a branch of willow in thirty-six places, and as each month passed over, a notch was with extreme delight taken off.

A year elapsed, and but little change took place in B——; but ere a second was far advanced, Harriet presented to her happy husband a fine little girl; she proved a source of additional pleasure to her grandmamma and youthful aunt, who were never tired of admiring or nursing her. Maria had accompanied her congratulations with a liberal present to her sister, and

as she now wrote affectionate though short letters frequently to her friends, they had almost ceased to feel any uneasiness respecting her, except that arising from not more frequently enjoying her society.

Ere the second year of Maria's absence had terminated, as Mrs. Harley and Ellen were seated together, a stranger was shown into the room, at least such he appeared, in the dim twilight of evening, to the inhabitants of the cottage.

"Do you not know me?" was asked in tones which made Mrs. Harley start.

"Know you!—it cannot be Frederick?—we heard you were drowned."

"That I was not drowned, my dear Mrs. Harley," said the visiter, advancing with an extended hand, "is evident, or I should not be here."

In an instant, Mrs. Harley had recognised Frederick Danvers, and welcomed him as one almost as dear to her as one of her own chil-

dren. Ellen, lost in astonishment, gazed upon the young man, of whose person she had not the slightest recollection.

"Is this," said he, turning towards her with affectionate greeting, "she whom I used to call my little sister, Ellen?"

"It is indeed Ellen, though no longer little; but how was it that we were led to mourn you as dead, for so many years?"

"The tale, my dear madam, is long, and must be told at some other time. The cause of my death not having been contradicted is this, the only letters I wrote to England were addressed to my brother, and as he left this country soon after receiving an account of the loss of the vessel in which I sailed, he never expected to hear more of me; my letters were forwarded to the continent after him, but as he expected nothing of importance, and believed that with his fortune he had lost every friend who had even seemed interested in his welfare, he never inquired for letters: thus mine, which would have

informed him that his brother still lived, lay at the different foreign post-offices unclaimed. I should never have returned from America, had I not at length been fortunate in attaining the object for which I set out; I have succeeded in making our treacherous agent refund property to the amount of eighty thousand pounds; this I find will pay our creditors all that was deficient, after the last dividend was made, and leave a balance of about thirty thousand pounds; of this, one-half will belong to my brother, one-third to you, and one-sixth to myself."

To express the heartfelt gratitude with which Mrs. Harley received this unlooked-for intimation is impossible—to know that all her husband's debts would be paid, was even more gratifying than the conviction that her daughters would no longer be in a state of dependence. When the agitation attending upon a first meeting under such peculiar circumstances had in some degree subsided, Mrs. Harley could not avoid expressing her surprise at the great altera-

tion which had taken place in Frederick's appearance, since she had last beheld him. The bloom of youth was fled, but its place was usurped by a manly bronze which more than compensated for its loss; his figure, though somewhat thinner than was desirable, was well formed, muscular, and commanding, and his countenance indicated the possession of all the highest attributes of humanity; but that air of vivacity and gaiety which had characterized the deportment and appearance of the youth, was changed for a gravity far beyond his years. Frederick, having heard that Harriet was married to his old acquaintance, Henry Ormsbey, expressed an intention of calling there the following day.

"I have but little time," said he, "for visiting the few friends who yet retain any remembrance of me, since I purpose quitting England in a few days."

"I hoped," replied Mrs. Harley, "you would remain to see the happiness you have caused,

and to enjoy that (which you used to anticipate with so much pleasure) of entering into the sacred profession, and not only pointing out to your flock the path to true happiness, but endeavouring to set an example for them to follow."

"Such, my dear madam, were the day-dreams of my youth, but my *châteaux en Espagne* were destined soon to fall to the ground; unable to remain at college, I endeavoured, as you are aware, to be of use, by immediately sailing for America. I have at length succeeded in the object for which I set out. On returning to England, I have the gratification of finding that every claim on the firm of Danvers and Harley will be discharged; but I find that I stand alone in this wealthy and populous neighbourhood. My brother is abroad—the few intimate friends of my father, with but one or two exceptions, deserted us when our affairs became embarrassed—those with whom I was most intimate when at college move in a sphere which my limited

means will not admit of my entering; and were I now to return to Oxford, and prepare for entering the church, I have no longer any interest by which to obtain the slightest preferment; added to all this, I must acknowledge that I have become so accustomed to a wandering life, that I do not think I could now sit down in that calm and tranquil retirement which I once looked forward to as the height of earthly felicity."

"I am grieved, my dear Frederick, to find that your misfortunes have had the power to cast such a gloom over your future prospects and present feelings; however, I trust that when you have travelled a little longer, you will be disposed to fix in England, and whatever others may feel, you may be assured of the sincerest friendship from all this family; added to which, will now be our warmest gratitude for the independence in which your exertions have placed us."

When Frederick left the cottage, Ellen ex-

pressed her joy at the prospect of paying all her father's debts. "Indeed, dearest mother, you know not," she said, "the pain I have felt in visiting Liverpool, since a shopman observed, as I passed the door one day, 'There goes a Miss Harley, dressed as smart as if her father's debts were paid, and she in affluence.' I was not very smart, dear mother, but I wore the handsome bonnet which Maria gave me: since that day I have never worn it; you have frequently asked the reason, but I could not bear to pain you by relating it. Oh, how often have I wished that it were possible, by any labour, to discharge to the uttermost every claim upon my father. How happy, how very happy, has Frederick Danvers made me!" As she thus spoke, the deeply-feeling girl burst into tears, and threw her arms around the neck of her parent.

"How little, my love," said Mrs. Harley, "do the world think of the acute pain their thoughtless remarks frequently cause to the

innocent objects of them. I am indeed grateful to the great Dispenser of all good, for the success which has attended the exertions of our amiable young friend, and I yet trust that in the happiness he confers upon others, he will get the better of his own early disappointments."

"Did you observe, mamma, that Frederick never inquired after Maria, and when you named her, he immediately spoke of Harriet. Maria and he were always such great friends, that I thought he would have been pleased to hear of her welfare."

"I did not remark any peculiar inattention when I spoke of Maria, but he was probably so much engrossed by the importance of the business on which he came, that he might unconsciously neglect some of those little courtesies, which would otherwise have occupied his thoughts."

"It might be so, but I thought his manner rather peculiar, and he did not neglect to make many inquiries after the health of Harriet, her

husband, and baby—nay, even Captain and the Miss Ormsbeys, and every body except Maria."

"You are so much attached to our dear Maria," returned Mrs. Harley, smiling, "that you do not think any one pays her the respect, attention, or admiration which is due; it is this feeling of jealousy on her account, which makes you imagine that Frederick was cold in his inquiries respecting her."

Ellen made no reply, but resolved to ascertain, when he again called, if her suspicion was right, that some coolness had arisen between them, ere the former had quitted England. The following day Mrs. Harley and Ellen were informed, that Mr. Ormsbey had unexpectedly met Frederick, on his way to call at their house, but after walking with him a short distance, he had suddenly recollected an engagement which he had before forgotten, and which obliged him to turn back.

Ere the lapse of many days, Frederick again called upon Mrs. Harley, to inform her of the

arrangements which he had made with the assignees of the firm, for the payment of the creditors, and likewise to put into her hands the security for ten thousand pounds, placed in the funds in her name. Mrs. Harley again expressed her warmest thanks, adding, "You cannot conceive the happiness I shall feel in having my husband's honour and credit so entirely redeemed; and still less can you imagine the joy of a mother's heart, in being able to recal her children from a state of dependence. The loss of wealth, and its attendant luxuries, were as nothing, when compared with the deprivation of my daughters' society—the idea that they must be exposed to all the trials and evils which wait upon those whom fortune has forsaken—but, above all, the knowledge that my noble-minded, my exemplary Maria, is sacrificing her youth, her health, her talents, to contribute towards the comfort of myself and her sisters, has weighed heavily upon my mind and spirits: this will no longer be necessary;

you have, through the goodness of Providence, enabled me to recal my child to her parent's roof, and to retain this dear girl under my protection, and may Heaven bless you for it!"

Frederick, overpowered by the emotion which Mrs. Harley's energetic thanks had caused, arose from his seat, and with a tremulous voice, attempted to say farewell. "You will not leave us yet, Frederick, or if you must go, you will surely call again before you quit England?"

"Do, Frederick," said Ellen, "come and see us again, perhaps dear Maria may be with us by that time, and you will like to see her once more."

"Not for worlds!" burst from the lips of the agitated young man.

"Not for worlds?" repeated Ellen, with a look of amazement, "Not for worlds, see your old companion, Maria Harley?"

"I beg pardon," said he, "I know not what I say; excuse me, for I am not quite well. Adieu, may Heaven bless you all!" And with

these words he hurried from the room, cleared the garden in about half a dozen steps, and was out of sight long before the inmates of the cottage had recovered themselves sufficiently to express their astonishment.

"How very extraordinary is Frederick's conduct! I really am apprehensive his disappointments, and the difficulties he has had to encounter in America, have affected his intellects."

Harriet, who was seated with her mother and sister when Frederick entered, had partaken of the surprise they expressed, though being of a less energetic temperament than Ellen, and likewise infinitely less attached to Maria, she did not feel so acutely the singularity of his behaviour. She now agreed entirely with Mrs. Harley on the probable cause of his extraordinary expressions, and arose from her seat with the intention of proceeding home, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Ellen, what are you doing?—you have pulled that beautiful rose to

pieces which you have been tending so carefully—just as it has come into bloom, too!"

"I have, indeed," said Ellen, throwing back the [illegible]ch, clustering curls, which as she stooped over her plants shaded her lovely cheek; "I have indeed destroyed, in one thoughtless moment, what I have watched with so much care for weeks. I could moralize upon this," she continued, mournfully; "so lately sprung into life, so beautiful—so sweet—and my ruthless hand in an instant destroys all that I have so much admired."

A tear arose in Ellen's usually bright eye, and trickled down her cheek, as she began [illegible]lect her scattered rose-leaves; whilst Harriet, observing her distress, assisted in her occupation, and then said, "Do not grieve for your rose, Ellen; see, another bud will soon be in blow."

"Do you think, Harriet," she replied, on seeing that Mrs. Harley had quitted the room, "that I weep for my flower?" Then advancing,

and placing one hand on her sister's shoulder, and looking earnestly in her face, "Tell me, Harriet—tell me if you love me, the cause of the universal coldness of manner with which Maria's name is heard, for spoken, I have observed, it never is by any lips but ours. I have indeed latterly ceased to name her to any of our friends; as, if before cordial and kind, they instantly became grave and silent. I have seen the effect, but am unable to guess the cause: it is long since any one has asked after her health, and Frederick Danvers, he to whom Maria was as a sister, he wishes to avoid her: tell me, dear Harriet, what all this means."

Harriet, putting one arm round the agitated girl, said, "I am sorry you have observed this, Ellen; but you know there has always been something very mysterious respecting the situation in which Maria is placed, and where there is mystery the world naturally suspects something wrong."

"But no one can suspect Maria of acting improperly," said Ellen.

Harriet made no reply, and at that moment Mr. Ormsbey entering the room, she endeavoured to turn the conversation, but Ellen's feelings were wrought up to a pitch that would not admit of being so easily checked; she therefore applied to Mr. Ormsbey for information on the subject, which had engrossed herself and sister, saying, if she could meet with no satisfactory solution of what she had observed, she would apply to their joint friends.

"I think it is better you should hear from us, dear Ellen," said Mr. Ormsbey, "what you may be more pained in learning from any one else, that your sister is suspected of living with —a gentleman."

"I do not quite understand you," returned Ellen, with a puzzled look; "I know she has been suspected of living with a pig-faced lady —with a divorced wife—with a deaf and dumb

person—with, in short, every kind of female who could be imagined to wish for a companion; but why a gentleman should turn night into day, and why he should want a companion like Maria, I cannot conceive nor understand."

Mr. Ormsbey smiled at the simplicity of his young sister-in-law, and then continued, "It is said that a very wealthy and dissipated man fabricated the story of the 'pig-faced lady,' for the purpose of seducing young and unsuspecting women into his power, apparently as companions, and that by making them enter into a solemn engagement not to relate to their friends any circumstance that might occur whilst with him, he remained free from suspicion. Rumour adds, that Maria having been thus inveigled into his power, remained under his protection for the stipulated period, during which her beauty and accomplishments have caused her to gain such an ascendancy over his affections, that he cannot bear to be separated from her, and she has not only become so accustomed to the luxuries with

which she is surrounded in a foreign country, but her affections are likewise so entirely engaged by her protector, who is said to be handsome and irresistibly attractive, that she does not wish to quit him."

Ellen listened with compressed lips, and an almost bursting heart, to Mr. Ormsbey. When he ceased speaking, slowly and with difficulty she said, "Whence have such rumours arisen?"

"There is foundation for them, we must admit," replied Mr. Ormsbey, "when we take into consideration the little that even we know of this mysterious affair, to which is added the cold and distant manner of Maria towards her old friends, her determination to return to her engagement, although urged by her mother and sisters not to do so; and, finally, her having been met by a very handsome man twenty miles hence, the evening of her departure, with whom she set out in a plain travelling-carriage and four—this my sisters ascertained."

"Then," said Ellen, "if I understand you

rightly, you and Harriet suspect that our sister is living in a dishonourable manner, under the protection of some gentleman."

"There is but too much reason to apprehend it," said Harriet.

The colour mounted to Ellen's cheek, and her sparkling eyes seemed to shoot their reproachful glances through the breast of Harriet, as she exclaimed, "Shame on you both, for having even for an instant dared to think so! This, then, beloved Maria, is thy reward for sacrificing thy health and happiness for our comfort! We, who eat the bread which thou hast so hardly earned, and who even now revel in luxuries which by severe privations thou hast been enabled to bestow upon us, are amongst the first to believe of thee what I shudder even to mention! How, Harriet, could you submit to hear repeated the rumours which you have named, without straining every nerve to save one so dear to you from calumny? She is not your sister, Mr. Ormsbey, but for the honour

of your wife, you should have been the champion of her sister's character. Oh! were I a man, no one should dare to breathe one word against her fair fame."

"Mr. Ormsbey, struck with the enthusiastic affection of the indignant girl, assured her, that he did not himself give credence to the unfavourable reports which were in circulation relative to Maria, and deeply regretted that he was not sufficiently informed respecting her situation to offer the refutation he wished.

"Send," said Ellen, "the vile calumniators to me, and I will refute all their scandalous reports. I will stake my life on the purity of Maria Harley, and I will offer such proofs as the most incredulous will not dare to question."

"What proofs, Ellen, can you offer? Has Maria, then, intrusted you with the knowledge of those circumstances of which she refused to inform our mother?"

"No, Harriet; I have only those proofs to offer which are known equally to you as to my-

self—those of a life, not merely free from reproach during eighteen preceding years, but setting an example of every christian virtue to all around her. Young as I was, how well do I recollect, when the death of my father and the distressing change in our affairs took place, her saying to me, 'Weep not, Ellen, for what is unavoidable, but bear with fortitude those privations, to which you must submit, that you may become a support, instead of a burden to our bereaved mother. Pray for divine assistance in the thorny path which is before you, and let your conduct always be such, as will bear the all-searching eye of Omnipotence, who is ever the protector of the widow and fatherless; and should it please him to increase your trials in this world, you may still look forward with confidence to being received in a far better.' Every word, and her angelic look as she raised her own tearful eyes to heaven, were indelibly impressed upon my memory; and though I fear I have been far from acting up to her wishes,

the thought of, Would Maria act thus? has checked in me many a hasty ebullition of temper. And on whom or what has Maria bestowed the money which she has gained? Is it on elegant dresses?—or jewels?—or luxuries for herself? Or is it in saving a fortune to support her when that beauty, which is supposed to have gained her so lucrative, so infamous a station, is gone? Is it thus that Maria has disposed of her wealth? No, no—she supports her mother in respectability and comfort—she has educated her young sister, and enabled her to gain an independence for herself, though happily that is no longer necessary—she has added to the portion of her wedded sister—she has purchased for that sister numerous luxuries which the narrowness of her own income rendered it impossible for her otherwise to possess—she is still the friend of the aged, the sick, and the needy—she is the most affectionate, the most dutiful, the best of daughters—the sweetest of sisters, and most amiable of women! If these

are not proofs sufficient to satisfy the doubts of the most sceptical, I am convinced an angel from heaven would not be believed."

Whilst Ellen thus warmly defended the character, and eulogised the virtues of her sister, Henry Ormsbey and Harriet felt ashamed that they had, for a moment, suffered a doubt to harbour in their breasts. Henry ingenuously acknowledged his error, adding, "I wish that Frederick Danvers had questioned you rather than me, about Maria."

"Did he question you?" eagerly inquired Ellen.

"Yes; he asked me some few particulars, but I was unable to give him any satisfactory answers, and I saw that whatever he might have heard, was confirmed by my telling him that we were all kept in ignorance of every circumstance respecting her. He appeared hurt, which was natural enough, considering they were like brother and sister; when I see him again, I will tell him to ask you about Maria."

"You will not have an opportunity; he will see you no more before he quits England. So, my poor sister, this accounts for your oldest friend and companion not wishing to see you."

Ellen now sunk into a train of melancholy thought, when Harriet rising, kissed her tenderly, saying, "Don't think any more of what we have said Ellen, as yours, I am sure is the most just view of the subject; at any rate it would be very ungrateful in us to think otherwise."

Ellen then left alone, relieved her oppressed heart by a flood of tears, and resolved to spare her mother, if possible, the pain she endured, by keeping these distressing rumours from her knowledge.

Harriet Ormsbey was gentle and amiable, but very inferior to either of her sisters, in energy of character or talent. Yet, although in many respects, there was a great similarity of natural character in Maria and Ellen, there were some striking differences: Maria was dis-

tinguished, not only for considerable genius, but for a solidity of judgment, and command of temper, rarely associated, as in her, with intense feeling. Ellen, on the contrary, though equal in talent, was hasty in her judgment, warm in her resentments and her affections, with but little command over her feelings. She was in the habit of speaking from the impulse of the moment, rather than reflection, but fortunately her disposition was so excellent, that the impulse was rarely erroneous. Ellen's naturally impetuous temper had been but little checked, as Mrs. Harley's spirits, weakened by the accumulation of misfortunes, with which she was at once overwhelmed, were unequal, for a length of time, to the exertion requisite for the task of attending strictly to her youngest daughter; and when she could rally them sufficiently, she found it impossible to chide one, who by the playful gaiety of her manner, and her unceasing affectionate attention to herself, caused her otherwise melancholy hours to be

gilded with a ray of sunshine, such as she had hardly dared to hope for.

When Maria returned to her home, from which she had so long been separated, she was highly gratified to find that sister, whom she had left but a child, growing into a lovely and accomplished woman; but whilst she beheld with affectionate admiration, her many endearing qualities, she perceived with apprehension that her almost ungovernable feelings were likely to be the source of much future misery to herself. Ellen looked upon Maria as the most perfect of created beings; and the latter, soon becoming aware of the influence she held over her, exerted it to counteract those failings which Ellen possessed from nature and education. Although the time which Maria was enabled to spend with her friends was but short, it was long enough for Ellen to see and acknowledge her errors, to promise to amend them, and inwardly to endeavour to become as mild, as gentle, as forbearing, and as estimable

as Maria. With such an example ever in her mind, Ellen soon overcame, in a great degree, the natural impetuosity of her temper, and only when she thought Maria was not estimated as she deserved to be, did it burst forth with its former vehemence.

It has already been stated, that Frederick quitted England soon after the failure of Danvers and Harley, in the hope of being able to regain some part of the large property which had been sent to America. The assignees had lent an attentive ear to the plan he proposed adopting, and readily agreed to furnish him with funds for the undertaking. He left his native shore with a deeply oppressed heart; not only were his own prospects ruined, but those of all for whom he felt most anxious: Maria Harley, that lovely and amiable being, who had been his friend and playmate in infancy, and to whom he had looked as the companion of his future years, had told him they must part for ever. This was the cruellest stroke of all;

could he but have hoped that she would eventually become the mistress of any home, however humble, that he might have the power to offer, it would have given him spirit and energy to have undertaken almost impossibilities; but to all his entreaties, she only replied, "Frederick, our dream of happiness and of love is over; from this time I must devote every energy towards obtaining a livelihood for my mother and Ellen. All we can expect from Harriet, for some years, is to maintain herself, therefore, on my exertions alone must my beloved parent depend for support."

Frederick vainly besought her to suffer him to apply to Mrs. Harley, for her consent to an engagement, that they should be united at a future period, when he might be enabled, by turning to use those talents which nature, and an excellent education had bestowed, to offer her a comfortable though not luxurious home. All his efforts were unavailing. "The sacrifice," she said, "must be complete, to be of

service; my mother happily knows not of our attachment, she must never know it, we must endeavour to forget it, and each labour to gain an independence. You are young, with the world before you, and without a tie; you will yet, I trust, rise above those calamities which have so materially injured your present prospects; you have talents, and an excellence of disposition, which will render you an ornament to any profession, and I yet flatter myself I shall hear of your success in some honourable employment. A woman's sphere is very limited: there is but one way in which she can make use of the talents or accomplishments she may possess, and that is so humble, as to take from me every hope of doing more than supporting my mother in the frugalist manner, but to that purpose I devote the remainder of my life."

Such were the sentiments expressed by Maria; and Frederick, whilst he admired her self-devotedness, could scarcely help inwardly accusing her of coldness and want of affection towards

himself. He knew not that her heart was almost bursting, and that his welfare formed a principal part of the cause of her refusal to enter into an engagement. A time she thought might possibly arrive, when the joint exertions of her sisters and herself would enable them to support her mother without inconvenience; but that period could never arrive when she would be, in point of fortune, a desirable wife for Frederick. As the wealthy heiress of Belle Vue, had the power been hers, she would gladly have bestowed herself upon him, had he been, as he now was, utterly destitute; but as the portionless daughter of a bankrupt, she felt she should by entering into an engagement prevent the possibility of his rising from the indigence in which he was placed.

Thus Maria reasoned for herself; perhaps for another she might have been a more gentle advocate: she feared the softness of her own heart, and affected a firmness of denial which she did not feel; and so well did she affect it that Frede-

rick parted from her half convinced that she had never really loved him. No one knew the intense suffering of that affectionate heart, when she had parted from him who had been to her a guide, companion, and friend; and who left her in the belief that his affection had never been returned as it deserved to be. Maria had none to applaud her for the sacrifice she had made; but as she prayed that night for support from above, to enable her to steer her course steadily through the difficulties which lay before her, she felt that inward approval which could alone recompense her for that sacrifice.

Frederick had been detained on his passage to America by contrary winds, for a length of time; and when at last their tedious voyage seemed nearly at an end, a storm suddenly arose, and drove them back; when, having been for several days exposed to the winds and waves, and having undergone all the misery of anticipated shipwreck, they struck upon a rock with such violence that the vessel almost seemed to

split—the horror of that appalling moment cannot be described—the sea rose mountains high, washing over the deck of the vessel, which was rapidly filling with water. There appeared to be but one chance of safety—and in that tremendous sea it was scarcely a chance—to trust themselves in the boats; not a moment was to be lost—but ere in such a storm their design could be accomplished, the boats were torn from the side of the ship, at the same instant that it was raised to an immeasurable height, and then dashed with redoubled fury upon the fatal rock, on which it had before struck. The vessel then instantly split; when the agonising shrieks of the drowning men became dreadful—those who had sufficient strength yet clung to the wreck—whilst each returning wave washed numbers from their hold.

Frederick, who had fixed a cord around his waist, having for some time held on by one of the masts, now felt his strength rapidly declining; but by exerting to the utmost all that re-

mained, he fixed the other end of the cord to some loose planks, and then amid the conflict of winds and waves, and the shrieks of dying men, he resigned himself to his impending fate. Whilst uttering a prayer, which he believed to be his last, he heard a rush of waters, and in an instant felt himself immersed in the deep.

When he recovered his recollection, he found himself still attached to the plank, and riding over the waves—now raised to a height that seemed as if he would reach the clouds—then sinking into a dark abyss between two immense mountains of water. How far he had thus proceeded, or how long he had been separated from the ship, he knew not. No speck was visible to his aching eye on that wide ocean; the wind had already begun to subside, but the troubled waters continued to rage with undiminished fury; the sky became more serene, and in a short time scarcely a breeze was to be felt, yet the rolling billows each moment threatened

destruction to the hapless young man whom they sustained.

Many hours did Frederick continue in this perilous situation, from which he was at length providentially rescued by a Portuguese ship, which saved his life—the only one spared of the number which had sailed in the ill-fated vessel in which he had embarked. As the ship in which Frederick was received was bound to South America, and far from the port to which he wished to go, it was long ere he reached the place of his original destination. When he arrived there, he was luckily recognised by a merchant who had met him at his father's, and who, vouching for his identity, prevented his suffering any inconvenience from the loss of those papers which he had taken with him; as directions had arrived before him in America; and nearly all the most essential papers were already at the house of an agent, who had been employed on behalf of the assignees, prior to his undertak-

ing to search into the affairs of the late partnership, and who had received directions to deliver them to Mr. Frederick Danvers whenever he might arrive in that country.

A considerable time had elapsed from Frederick's quitting England to that in which he reached the destined port; and when, after all the difficulties and dangers he had surmounted, he at length did so, he was assured by those on the spot that not the slightest chance existed of his expedition being of service. The treacherous agent, who had prevailed upon his brother and Mr. Harley to risk so large a property in America, had, as before stated, absconded with great part of it, and no inquiry had hitherto met with the smallest success respecting his movements. Of this Frederick was fully aware when he left England—he expected to encounter great difficulties; but he resolved that nothing should deter him from the prosecution of the inquiry for which he came to America, until thoroughly convinced that there was not the remotest pos-

sibility of success. To detail all that he encountered in his search for the fraudulent agent would lengthen this part of my narrative too much;—suffice it to say that by his coolness, intrepidity, and indefatigable exertion, he was enabled to trace him through all the intricacies of his devious route, and at length to reach his hiding-place; but not until he had travelled many thousand miles in pursuit of various fugitives, who had proved, when encountered, not to be the man he sought. When once discovered, his prevarication was useless; Frederick's firmness and decision soon caused the unhappy man to acknowledge his crime, and to restore all that remained of his ill-gotten wealth.

Frederick had beheld him in England five years before, when he had appeared in the prime of life, and in possession of superior talents, accompanied by a great deal of that kind of agreeable information, which men of business, who travel much in foreign countries, are generally masters of. He now beheld him grown prema-

turely old, suffering severely from ill health; but still more from the stings of conscience; and he left him under an impression that he must shortly give an account of his actions at a more solemn tribunal than any earthly one, where he sincerely prayed that he might meet with the same forgiveness, which he had ventured to promise in the name of Mrs. Harley and his brother.

Before Frederick quitted America, he heard that this unfortunate man was no more. Unfortunate he was in the truest sense of the word; since he had not resolution to withstand that temptation, which the generous confidence of his masters had placed in his way: had he done so, it is probable he might have lived to a good old age, respected, and in due time, wealthy: he deceived and ruined his employers, and in so doing, became wretched; obliged to hide himself from the eye of justice, in momentary fear lest his ill-gotten wealth should be taken from him, and himself pu-

nished; his constitution broke under the guilty fears he endured, and the only moment of ease he enjoyed, from the period in which he committed this crime, was that in which he restored the fruits of it, and was assured of the pardon of those whom he had so deeply injured.

Frederick had seized the earliest opportunity of writing to inform his brother of his providential escape; but Mr. Danvers having quitted England prior to the arrival of that information, and not expecting any letters of importance—his brother having, as he believed, been lost with the rest of the passengers—he, as has been before stated, rarely inquired for letters at the different places on the continent, at which he stopped. Thus, although Frederick continued to write frequently, a length of time elapsed, ere Mr. Danvers was aware that his brother had escaped a watery grave, and when he did at last receive this agreeable information, he was at Vienna, and having no correspondents

in England, those who would have felt interested in his welfare, knew not that he still lived.

Frederick did not write to the assignees, until success had crowned his efforts to regain a part of the property which had been lost, and having sailed for England himself immediately afterwards, it so chanced that he arrived at Liverpool before his letter, when he found to his surprise that he was still universally believed to have perished.

On his arrival at Liverpool, he accidentally encountered an old acquaintance, of the name of Alton, of whom he inquired respecting all whom he most regarded in the neighbourhood, particularly if he had seen or heard any thing of Mrs. Harley or her daughters.

"Yes," replied Mr. Alton, "I often see some of them, for young Ormsbey has married Harriet Harley, and resides at B——, of which place he is curate."

"And Mrs. Harley, and her other daughters, are they still at B——?"

"Mrs. Harley still resides in what was the gardener's cottage, with her youngest daughter, who is growing up very handsome; respecting the eldest, there are strange reports!"

"How, what do you mean?"

"I do not know very well what is the true state of the case," replied Mr. Alton, "I was at college at the time you went abroad, soon after which Miss Harley undertook some situation, about which there was at the time great mystery; she has constantly sent home money, I understand, to support her mother comfortably, and to procure the best masters for her youngest sister; she came home to pay them a short visit, after an absence of nearly four years, I saw her one day at Ormsbey's: I never beheld any one so much altered; she is still extremely pretty and interesting in appearance, but thin, and grave, and distant in

her manner, and quite unlike her sisters, who are gay and lively."

"But what strange reports are in circulation?" asked Frederick, commanding as steady a tone of voice as was possible, whilst the rapidly increasing gloom of the evening, hid his agitated countenance from his companion's view. "You said there were strange reports respecting Maria —— Miss Harley?"

"Yes, very strange ones; she is said to be in the keeping of a man of large fortune, who, unfortunately, having a wife already, cannot marry her, which he would otherwise do; but he evinces his affection, by giving her the power to provide for her friends amply."

"And you believe this calumny?" indignantly inquired Frederick.

"I neither believe nor disbelieve it, I merely repeat what I have heard; but, my dear fellow, if I had thought it would have annoyed you, I would not have repeated these reports."

"It must annoy me, Alton, to hear one,

whom I have always looked upon as a sister, thus spoken of; Mrs. Harley was like a mother to me, and her daughters were always regarded by me as beloved sisters."

"Very pretty sisters I am sure they are, Danvers, for the rest I cannot answer; they may all be amiable as when you left them, but the general impression is strong against the eldest. I must now quit you, for I have an engagement this evening, and you seem tired enough to prefer solitude to company."

Mr. Alton then quitted the hotel, but he took not with him the barbed arrow, with which he had inadvertently wounded the heart of his friend. Frederick recalled to his memory all Maria's excellences—her innate piety—her unaffected modesty—her pure and unsophisticated manners—her self-denial—her indifference to the pomp and luxuries attendant upon wealth. "Oh! no, no," exclaimed he, "this is impossible; Alton has suspected my attachment, and wished to annoy me it is the cruel stratagem of an unfeeling

schoolboy, I am sure it cannot be true." Thus believing, Frederick was enabled to gain that rest which would otherwise have deserted his pillow. He rose the next morning, with an intention of going to Mrs. Harley's, as soon as he had seen the assignees, and learnt what had been deficient when the last dividend was paid, as he was anxious to ascertain that something considerable would be left for the widow and orphans of Mr. Harley.

He accordingly waited upon the assignees immediately after breakfast, and from them he received a repetition of what had before agonized his heart. Miss Harley's situation, they said, was universally spoken of in Liverpool, as being one of shame. Frederick no longer wished to visit the cottage. He had not resolution to see the mother and sisters of her whom he had so long and ardently loved, of her who had been the beacon that lighted him through all the difficulties and dangers of his arduous undertaking!

Overwhelmed with sorrow, he returned to the hotel, where, in utter agony of spirit, he remained for some hours. Then again a ray of hope arose in his mind; all he had heard might be calumny; that surely was more probable, than that one whom he had known and loved so long, should prove unworthy. He determined to go to Mrs. Harley's, to see her and her daughters, and to endeavour to learn from Ormsbey whether there was any truth in the reports so injurious to Maria's honour, and which must be put an end to, if, as he flattered himself, they should prove without foundation.

Thus determining to act, Frederick had proceeded to B——, but when there, felt himself quite unequal to proceeding to Mr. Ormsbey's, to make any inquiries on the subject which gave him so much uneasiness. When Frederick afterwards met him, as has been already stated, he requested to know where his old friend Maria was; when Mr. Ormsbey instantly related all he knew concerning her, adding, " A

very strange affair, is it not? People speak very illnaturedly about it, but I would willingly hope there is nothing improper, though I should be better pleased to have more power to refute such reports. All I can say is, that Maria is very generous, at any rate; though how she becomes possessed of the means of being so to such an extent, I cannot imagine."

Thus thoughtlessly speaking, did Mr. Ormsbey wound his hearer to the quick. Frederick felt that further inquiry was useless: Ormsbey's manner, equally with his words, showed that he doubted the purity of Maria Harley! The agonized young man, unable to pursue the conversation, pleaded a suddenly recollected engagement, and instantly quitted his companion. He quitted him, not to return to the haunts of men, but to ramble through those shady walks in which he had formerly been in the habit of strolling with Maria. He reached a rustic seat, which had been made at her request. This well-remembered place brought her before him

in all her native purity and loveliness—he threw himself down on that spot where she had been seated when last he visited it. There he had first told her that he loved. There she had given him leave to apply to her parents for their sanction, on his next return from college. He recalled to his memory all her virtues—all her graces—then inwardly exclaimed, "Oh! Maria, if thou hast fallen from virtue, angels may weep, for scarcely are they more pure than thou wert when last we parted; and now—I dread to think to what thou art reduced; I could have borne any thing but this. I had little hope of becoming thy husband—thou hadst forbade all thought of that—but when I toiled for a restoration of part of our property, the idea of placing thee in independence was a constant spur to my exertions; had it not been for that, I should have sunk under the difficulties and labours of the task; but when, exhausted and worn out by fatigue and disappointment, I beheld thee in my mind's eye—pure—virtuous—lovely as when

last we met—submitting to the caprice and purse-proud insults of those for whose advantage thou wert obliged to devote thy talents. I thought I beheld all this, and I no longer felt fatigue—my resolution rose above repeated disappointments—I succeeded—I returned to bring thy family what would enable them and thee to live without the aid of thy talents. With rapture I again placed my foot upon my native land. I meant once more to try to persuade thee to join thy fate with one who had loved thee so truly; but what a blow has fallen upon me, and from a quarter where I least expected it! I could have borne to hear that thou wert dead—I know not how to bear thy dishonour."

Frederick's emotion was such as to cause his limbs to shake with violence—tears fell down his burning cheeks, and were some relief to his oppressed feelings. "Ah!" he exclaimed, as they dropped upon his hands, "tears! I did not think I should ever have cause to weep for

thy misconduct, Maria; but they shall be the last I ever shed on thy account."

Then rising, he hurried from the spot, and when arrived at his hotel, gave immediate orders for every necessary preparation for quitting England without delay. The following day he again called on Mrs. Harley, and on the succeeding one embarked for the continent. After remaining some time in Paris, he made a walking tour through the south of France, Switzerland, and part of Italy, where he purposed remaining a considerable time. During his long residence in America he had become an excellent pedestrian, and continued, not only during his short stay in England, but in France and Switzerland, and on his first arrival at Genoa, where he remained a short time, to pursue a system which had been of service to his health and spirits, by keeping his body in exercise, whilst his mind was amused and interested by the ever-varying scenery through which he passed, at the same

time that so economical a method of travelling suited best his limited means.

But Frederick soon found that in the enervating climate of Italy he was unequal to going through so much bodily exertion as had been his custom for several preceding years; he therefore resolved to take exercise in moderation, and to remain longer at each place than had been his wont. After having viewed every thing worthy of note in the city of Genoa, and its immediate neighbourhood, he proceeded towards the inner and mountainous parts of the district, where he took up his abode at a small *osteria*, recommended by a friend who had himself made it his residence during several days. Here Frederick found himself entirely secluded from the world, for in his rambles among these barren mountains he rarely met with a human being—his faithful dog was his only companion, whilst his gun gave an ostensible reason for his wanderings to the people at whose house he stayed.

One day, having imprudently remained out, ex-

posed to the burning heat of a mid-day sun, he was in the course of the ensuing night attacked by a high fever. The medical man who was sent for found it necessary on his arrival, to bleed and blister him most severely. During several days his life seemed suspended by a thread; but at the termination of that period, the complaint took a favourable turn, and in a short time he was considered quite out of danger, though so enfeebled as to give little hope of being able to pursue his intended route for some weeks.

Whilst that lassitude of mind and body, which is usually the consequence of violent fever, remained, Frederick was grateful for the frequent visits of the village Esculapius, whose learning, although but of a very *médiocre* description, was such as, when added to great good-nature and a naturally large stock of animal spirits, rendered him a desirable visiter during some of those tedious hours which would otherwise have been spent by the convalescent entirely alone; and as his strength was not equal to bestowing

much time or attention upon literary pursuits, or the labours of the pencil, in which he excelled, the good-humoured gossip of the apothecary was generally welcome; therefore, he being a single man, and residing at a short distance, usually spent his evenings with his patient. Upon one occasion, Signor Sforza's countenance was unusually animated when he entered Frederick's apartment, and without waiting for his accustomed welcome, he exclaimed, "I have got something new to tell you, at last."

"What is that, signor?" languidly inquired Frederick.

"Well, you know, signor, I told you that the old ruinous villa, about two miles hence, had been occupied during the last three years by a family supposed to be English, about whom there have been, and still are, strange reports; some say one of the ladies is deranged—others that she has been unfaithful to her husband, who, not wishing to make a public example of her, has sent her into banishment—

others, again, that she is a young unmarried woman of high rank, who having by her conduct brought disgrace upon her family, they gave out her death to the world, whilst they resolved to make her pass the remainder of her days in privacy, if not absolute confinement—nay, even worse than all this has been whispered, something about murder having been committed in England; in short, there have been a thousand reports, all probably equally far from the truth: however, this is certain, the villa which during many preceding years had been deserted, and universally believed to be haunted, has been put into complete repair, and two ladies, and sometimes, but not always, a gentleman, have resided in it for the last three years."

"I think," said Frederick, smiling, "I have heard all this before."

"True, signor, I have told you that, and I may have told you that all these circumstances caused in me so anxious a desire to know how

the case really stood, that I have left no means untried to obtain information. All my efforts proved of little avail; yet so great was my wish to see these ladies, that I have twice with difficulty escaped being taken up, as I lurked in the garden to watch their coming out by moonlight; and once the gardener absolutely did put a little small shot in my arm, and my friends supposed I had been attacked by banditti. My curiosity, though baffled, was only increased. I heard that these ladies went to chapel every evening—I became so constant an attendant at vespers at the neighbouring convent, as to have gained great credit for my devotion, and to have made one of the monks who officiated my firm friend, he having formed a very high opinion of my superior sanctity: as you may be sure, I was too wise to let him know the cause of my regular attendance there. But, alas! all my endeavours were of no avail; the only discovery I made was, that but one of the ladies was a true Catholic—they both went through

the common decencies, such as kneeling and rising as others did, but one only attended to all the ceremonies of our holy religion. At length, with some difficulty I made an acquaintance with an Italian girl, who lived in their service, and who told me that a gentleman was sometimes there for several weeks at a time, but he never went beyond the garden; and as even that was always at night, when he was much wrapped up, she had never seen him, and had only once caught a sight of one of the ladies, who was very pretty; and she and the other Italian servants supposed this lady had very likely run away from her husband with the gentleman who visited there, instead of being, as was reported, confined to the villa by an injured husband. An English man and woman servant ordered every thing for the ladies. I inquired whether the pretty lady she had seen was a Catholic or Protestant; but on this subject she could give me no information."

"Is this the news you have for me, my good

friend? I think I have heard it all from you more than once before," said Frederick.

"Perhaps you have, signor; but what I am going to relate I could not tell you, because I did not know it myself. The fact is this," continued the signor, assuming the important look of a person on the point of confiding a secret of the greatest consequence: "I was roused from my bed at an early hour this morning, by a summons to attend one of the ladies at the villa. You may imagine the haste with which I dressed, and hurried to my patient; when I arrived there, I was shown by an English servant into a sitting-room, furnished with every convenience and elegance; after remaining a few minutes alone, a door opened, and I turned towards it, in the expectation of at last beholding one of the fair ladies whom I had so long wished to see, when, conceive my disappointment at perceiving the same closely-veiled figure, which had eluded all my attempts to view those features, so entirely concealed when at chapel.

"The female approached, and in a sweet and gentle voice, though with a foreign accent, requested me to be seated. 'Signor,' she then said, 'the lady for whom I wish you to prescribe is extremely ill, I almost fear her life may be in danger, having long been in a very indifferent state of health, for which medical aid has been of no avail. During the night she was seized with violent spasms, from the pain of which I trust your skill may be enabled to relieve her—more than this I dare not hope.'—'When I see the lady, signora, I shall be better able to judge,' said I, 'what is possible for me to do.'—'You cannot see her, signor,' said she.—'Not see her!' resumed I, 'then how can I possibly prescribe for her?'—'I will describe all the symptoms attending her disease.'—'I should be glad, signora, to hear those symptoms from you, but without feeling the pulse, I cannot possibly prescribe for the invalid—even the features frequently indicate the nature of a disorder more fully than any verbal explanation

can do.'—'True, signor; but there are reasons which make it utterly impossible this lady should be seen by you; and much as I regret that you cannot do so, I see no alternative, but to await the arrival of a physician from Genoa, since you decline favouring me with your assistance.'—'Pardon me, signora, I did not absolutely say that; I could wish you would so favour me, but if I cannot be indulged with a sight of my patient, I will thank you to describe her case as well as you can, and I will then do all that is in my power for her.'

"The signora sweetly thanked me, and then gave a description of her friend's complaint, with which I will not trouble you. After a little consideration, I said, 'I remember, signora, to have heard of an Indian princess being attended by an English practitioner, who was not allowed to see her, but who saved her life by bleeding her notwithstanding. Now, although you object to my seeing your friend, you probably will not do so to

my feeling her pulse, since the lady's arm can be extended between the curtains.'

"After a moment's hesitation the lady arose, as she said to prepare her friend for my visit, and having left me, quickly returned to show me the way to the apartment of the invalid, in which I found a female attendant seated close to a bed from whence issued groans that were heart-rending even to one accustomed to attend the bed of death. I advanced towards the patient, when the attendant, whose countenance wore a strange mixture of grief and ill-humour, seized upon me, loudly exclaiming, 'Hold!' I started back, and for an instant the groans ceased. I then requested the lady might extend her arm, when a small white hand, thin almost to transparency, on which the blue veins were distinctly visible, peeped from the closed curtains. I took it within mine—it burned like fire. I felt the pulse—it was alarmingly rapid and agitated. I was convinced that instantaneous bleeding only could relieve the patient,

and I expressed myself to that effect. The invalid consented to the operation, which I performed without delay upon an arm, white, delicate, and attenuated, as the hand I had before seen.

"Whilst I bled her, my patient fainted; I was going to throw open the curtains to admit air, but found them held by the attendant who placed within them was supporting her arm. I remonstrated on the impropriety of debarring her from air, and such assistance as I could give, when a gentleman darted from a recess in the room, within which he had remained unseen by me, and in a haughty tone ordered me to quit the lady's chamber, and when she was recovered sufficiently to admit of my return I should be apprized of it. The look which accompanied the words prohibited reply or hesitation on my part, and I instantly retired to the sitting-room I had before been ushered into; where, after remaining a short time alone, the veiled lady again joined me, informing me that her friend was recovered from the swoon

which had for a moment alarmed me; but did not wish me again to visit her, though she requested I might be informed that her spasms were relieved. The *incognita* then placed a handsome *douceur* in my hands, and requested me to call the following day, when she hoped to give me a favourable account of my patient. Thus saying, she wished me good morning, and, amazed by what I had seen and heard, I left the villa with a determination of confiding what had passed to you; for though secrecy was required, of course it can be no breach of confidence my telling you; since I know you will not name it to any one. But on my arrival at home, I found that I was wanted several miles off, and have only just been able to return.—Now, signor, is not this extraordinary?"

"It is indeed," replied Frederick, "a most extraordinary affair; you have interested me more deeply than I could have imagined possible respecting strangers. But these mysterious people are English, and that would in itself

make me feel an interest in their fate in a foreign country.—Do you think your patient will recover?"

"Never: from what transpired in the course of my conversation with the lady of the veil, and from what I myself observed, I should think she is dying of that slow, but fatal disease, a broken heart.'

"Poor lady! is it indeed so hopeless a case? What was the appearance of the gentleman whom you saw?"

"To own the truth, I should not know him were I again to see him; for at the moment of his sudden apparition, I was suffering extreme alarm lest the invalid should not recover from the syncope into which she had fallen, and this fear, in addition to that caused by the loud tone and imperative manner of the stranger, took from me almost all power of perception; though, as I quitted the room, I observed that he was tall and good-looking."

"Was the lady in the veil well-formed?"

"I should think so from her height and air, as she entered the room; but I have never seen her without a large shawl in addition to a thick and impenetrable veil."

This strange occurrence occupied the thoughts and conversation of Frederick and Signor Sforza until a later hour than usual, when the latter retired, assuring the former that on the following evening he should be informed of all that passed on his second visit.

During many days, Signor Sforza continued to attend at the villa—sometimes admitted to feel the pulse of his patient—at other times only speaking to her whom he designated the veiled lady. He felt assured that there was nothing in the power of medicine to perform, beyond such temporary relief as anodynes might procure; though as the parties were evidently opulent, he thought they might wish for other advice. This opinion he expressed, and at the same time inquired if he should send to Genoa for the aid of a physician.

"I thank you for your candour, signor," replied the lady of the veil, "but we are perfectly satisfied that you can, and will, do all that is possible for your patient; and we know but too well that recovery is hopeless. It is scarcely, indeed," she added, deeply sighing, "to be wished for."

Signor Sforza felt that he had said all that was then incumbent upon him. On quitting his patient about a fortnight after his first attendance upon her, Signor Sforza requested to speak to the lady of the veil immediately.

As soon as they were alone he said, "I grieve to tell you that your friend is much altered for the worse, since yesterday; I do not think she has many hours to live."

"So soon!" replied the lady, in tremulous accents, "is her death so very near, signor?"

"I do not think there is the slightest hope of her living through the day, and believing the lady to be a Catholic, I thought it right to apprize you of this."

"You did right," she plaintively replied, "quite right; wait a few moments until I have asked the advice of a friend, in this distressing emergency."

She of the veil was but a short time absent, and at her return, in a subdued and agitated voice, besought the signor to proceed to the monastery, and send thence, without a moment's delay, one of the good fathers.

"Who shall I send, and who shall I say requires aid?"

"Send any one of whom you have a good opinion, and tell him a Catholic lady is dying, and requires his assistance; that is enough."

Signor Sforza hastened to execute his commission, and being fortunate in finding his own confessor, and peculiar friend, father Francisco, at home, he despatched him to the villa, without a moment's delay.

The lady, although, as long as her health admitted it, a constant attendant upon the evening service, had never had a confessor

during her residence in Italy, and from the extreme privacy in which she and her friend lived, it was impossible for her to gain information respecting the character of those around them; but the genuine simplicity and integrity of Signor Sforza could not be misunderstood, in consequence of which the lady of the veil ventured to rely upon his recommendation of a confessor for her friend.

The augury of the medical practitioner proved correct, ere the day concluded, he heard that his patient was no more. On learning this intelligence, Frederick would gladly have offered any services in his power to the family at the villa, but Signor Sforza reminded him that were not privacy and retirement from the knowledge of the world, and more particularly their own countrymen, an object of the greatest importance to them, they would not have fixed upon such a residence, nor when there have pursued so extraordinary a line of conduct; therefore, he very naturally inferred, that the

greatest kindness the Signor Danvers could show them, was not to notice them in any way. Frederick admitted the correctness of this judgment, though he regretted that he could not make himself useful under these circumstances, notwithstanding his returning strength would, he flattered himself, have enabled him to exert himself in their behalf.

A few evenings afterwards, the signor entered Frederick's little sitting-room, with an air of bustling importance, which showed that he either had obtained, or fancied he had obtained, information of some consequence. "Now, Signor," said he, "I can do something for you, if you like to accompany me: the poor young lady is to be buried at twelve o'clock to night, in the chapel belonging to the convent. My confessor says the funeral is to be strictly private, with the exception of the nuns and monks of the convent and monastery adjoining, but that he will lend me a cowl, if I wish to be in attendance. I asked if you might not go

with me; at first he declined, but after a little entreaty consented, upon condition that you will likewise wear a monk's cowl, and not inform any one of your having been allowed to see the funeral rites performed."

Frederick warmly thanked the signor for his kind recollection of him, and said he would most readily agree to the conditions prescribed by the friendly monk.

"But," said Signor Sforza, "do you feel strong enough to bear the fatigue of the walk, and attending a ceremony which will require you to stand during so long a period?"

"I am quite able to undertake much greater fatigue," replied Frederick, "I believe I only want a motive for exertion; my illness has enervated my mind as much as my body, and any thing which will excite me sufficiently to make me throw off this indolent feeling, will be of service; therefore fix your hour, and doubt not I will be ready to attend you."

The signor accordingly appointed the time at

which he should call for Frederick, who then retired to take a few hours rest, prior to attempting so unwonted an exertion.

A little before midnight the companions set out from the *osteria*, at which Frederick was residing; Signor Sforza carrying under his arm the habiliments which were lent to him by his confessor. When they were quite out of sight of any one, they habited themselves as monks, and proceeded towards the convent of St. Agata. When not far from it, they placed themselves behind a small clump of trees, until they beheld the funeral procession, winding slowly down the hill behind them, when, as it was passing the clump which shaded them from view, they contrived gently to glide in amongst the other attendants, without attracting observation. A private door of the convent opened for the procession to enter, when it proceeded through long and dark cloisters, lighted only by the occasional glimmer of a small taper, suspended from the damp and

gloomy walls: not a sound was to be heard except the hollow tread of the monks. At the termination of the cloisters, two large doors were suddenly thrown open, when so resplendent a blaze of light burst upon them, as for an instant to dazzle the eyes of those more accustomed to such scenes, and to render Frederick and Signor Sforza nearly blind. At the same moment a choir of almost celestial voices, struck up one of the most harmonious and sublime anthems they had ever heard. The nuns, with the lady abbess, advanced in solemn pace to meet the procession, which had already entered the chapel. The coffin was placed on the floor, the chief mourners, a lady and gentleman, stood one on each side, the former enveloped in a long black mantle, and thick crape veil thrown over her head, whilst the face of the latter, though not veiled, was equally hidden by a cloak, which muffled him entirely around the face.

The voices ceased, and all was again silent,

when, after the lapse of a few moments, a strain of instrumental music, faint and distant, seemed to float sweetly through the air, gradually assuming a louder and more sublime strain, as it approached the mournful group, when it slowly died away; and a female voice, whose melodious strains might vie with those which "angels sing to expiring saints," was heard to chant a requiem for the dead. It arose soft and low, then swelled with awful, though harmonious grandeur, until the whole space above and around, was filled with notes of mournful sublimity, which finally died away in plaintive cadence. All listened to the sublime and awe-inspiring sounds, with mute attention; the mourning female sobbed aloud, and Frederick, whose mind and body were alike enervated by the long illness, from which he had only just recovered, felt the contagion; tears trickled down his cheeks, but, covered by the cowl, his emotion was unnoticed. The scene was awfully impressive. When the

music ceased, the other part of the service commenced; after which the monks raised the coffin from the ground, six nuns held the pall, the chief mourners proceeded, and the rest of the procession followed to the place of interment. When arrived at what appeared to be a recently-made vault, the coffin was slowly lowered—at that instant a hollow groan burst from the bosom of the stranger. The lady, who had appeared with difficulty to support herself during this trying scene, started at this sound—the vault was then closed, and the unconscious clay was shut out from all by whom it had been beloved. At that instant a faint shriek was heard, and the female mourner sunk into the arms of her companion!

Frederick, in the first moment of confusion, darted forward to assist her, but instantly found himself held back by Signor Sforza; ere he could disengage himself from the signor's grasp, the veil of the mourner was thrown

back to give her air, and he beheld the features of Maria Harley!—not as he had before seen them, radiant in health and beauty—but pale, attenuated, apparently dying in the arms of a stranger!

Frederick's feelings had before been wound up to the highest pitch of nervous excitement, they were now entirely overpowered. Without uttering a word or groan, he would have sunk to the earth, had not the arm of Signor Sforza sustained him, until the friendly confessor, who stood beside him, could aid him in removing his fainting companion to one of the nearest cells. Frederick soon recovering from the insensibility which had assailed him, would have returned to the chapel, had not Signor Sforza absolutely prohibited so imprudent an attempt. Father Francisco, who had returned to the mourning group, soon again joined them, saying, that their departure had not been observed in the confusion caused by the fainting of the young lady, who had been conveyed to

one of the cells belonging to the convent, and he had come instantly to propose assisting the signor to his own apartments, if he felt equal to the walk. Frederick languidly thanked the monk for his attention, but declined giving him any further trouble, as, with the assistance of Signor Sforza, he did not doubt, when once in the fresh air, to reach his lodgings without difficulty.

The deeply-feeling young man endeavoured to bear the unconscious questions of Signor Sforza, without exhibiting any peculiar signs of emotion, but the effort was almost beyond his power.

"Who could have expected," said the signor, "to see the face of my lady of the veil at the funeral, of all places! and a very pretty face it is, though I could not see the eyes, by reason of their being closed, and her cheeks and lips were as white as if she were a corpse; but her nose, and the whole shape of her face

was perfect; her figure, too, as the gentleman supported her, looked exquisitely fine. I never saw a more interesting group for a painter to delineate; if you had not fainted at that moment, I believe I might have seen the face of the *signore arrogante,* who ordered me so unceremoniously out of the invalid's apartment, and then I should probably recollect it, if I should ever again meet with him. Do you think, signor, you should remember the lady if you saw her again?"

"Remember her!" murmured Frederick, "can I ever forget her?"

"Well, now your memory must be very extraordinary, signor, if such a cursory sight of features is sufficient to impress them upon your recollection for ever; but are you faint again, signor? your limbs tremble, lean upon me a little more."

"Thank you, I am rather unwell, but I do not think I shall again faint, though from

still feeling the effects of my late indisposition, I am nervous, and easily affected by passing objects."

"Without being nervous, I think any one might feel agitated by the scene we have just witnessed; I have attended many funerals, but never beheld one so awfully impressive before."

"The music was quite sublime;" said Frederick, "that female voice was beyond any thing I could have conceived!"

"She is supposed," said Signor Sforza, "to be one of the finest singers in Italy, and yet we live in the land of song; and the effect of her full and mellifluous tones is increased, by the way in which the Lady's chapel is planned, to throw the voice forward; the organ being out of sight, and the singers likewise, at the same time that by some extraordinary skill in the original conformation of the building, the sounds are carried from behind the altar-piece, and through the vacant space in

such a way, that one can scarcely persuade oneself they are not celestial; this adds much to the solemnity and beauty of what would otherwise have been exquisite melody."

"I felt it to be beyond expression fine; but now, signor, having arrived at the *osteria*, I will say good night, and detain you no longer."

"Allow me to go in with you, and wait until you can assure me you have entirely recovered."

"I am quite recovered, I only want a little rest; good night," said Frederick, hastily answering, anxious to be once more alone, that he might commune with his own heart, and reflect upon the extraordinary scene he had beheld.

From the first moment he had received an account of the English ladies from Signor Sforza, he had felt an unaccountable kind of internal conviction that Maria was in some way connected with them. Yet that she should have resided so long in Italy, without her

friends being aware of it, was so improbable, as to check the idea as soon as it was formed. Reason seemed to say Maria could not be the veiled lady, an undefined sort of presentiment replied, that it was by no means improbable. This vague apprehension had led him to feel as ardent a curiosity on the subject, as that expressed by the signor, and had caused him to attend the funeral, with a sort of anxious expectation, that something would occur to confirm his fears, or to dissipate them altogether. This had added greatly to the nervous excitement such a scene was calculated to cause, even in an indifferent spectator. But when he really beheld the woman who had so long been idolized by him, under such painful, such humiliating circumstances, he was utterly unable to support himself.

Now left alone in his humble lodging, he groaned aloud, as his memory reverted to those days of happiness and innocence, when he and Maria had no thoughts, no wishes, hid from

each other. He had hoped that he had quite overcome every feeling of attachment towards her; that he could see her without pain. He was now convinced of the fallacy of such hopes. He had seen her, but a dagger would not have pierced his heart with such agony as that sight had done. Thus Frederick thought and felt.

The next day found him again in a high fever; the signor, on his calling to inquire after him, was shocked at the change which a few hours had made in his appearance, and severely blamed himself for having taken his patient to a scene, which his debilitated state had rendered him very unfit to encounter. The fever which had been subdued, rather than entirely eradicated, burst forth with renewed violence, and for several days Signor Sforza despaired of his recovery. During this period, the signor, who was really a man of kindly feelings, and who had formed a friendship for the solitary Englishman, watched him with un-

ceasing solicitude; and when he was at length rewarded by finding his patient's life out of danger, he felt it to be one of the happiest and proudest moments of his own life.

Frederick's restoration to strength was very slow; six weeks had elapsed from the day the funeral took place at St. Agata, and during that period he had not once alluded to the scene which had so greatly affected him; and Signor Sforza felt himself to have acted with so little judgment in the case, that he would gladly have allowed the whole proceeding to escape remembrance, if possible. At length Frederick summoned resolution to inquire if the signor had heard or seen any thing of the inmates of the villa since the night on which the funeral took place.

"Yes," replied he; "I went early the following morning, to inquire after the health of the lady; as I thought, though the gentleman might not wish to send for me, she might possibly like to see me. Imagine my astonishment at finding

that the birds had flown, and the cage empty, with the exception of the Italian servants, who were left in charge of the house, until the owner should arrive. My friend, the young Italian girl, informed me, that immediately after the funeral, the signora was brought home in a very exhausted state, but that a carriage being at the door, she was without a moment's delay placed in it, although she looked more fit for her bed or her grave, than a journey. The gentleman then got into it, and the English servants mounting on the box, the carriage was driven off, no one knew whither. The Italians said, they were paid by the English servants very liberally for their services, but they never once saw the face of the gentleman, as he kept himself so entirely muffled when liable to be seen. This," continued the signor, "was the substance of what I heard at the villa; I afterwards asked the postilions some few questions, who told me they drove the lady and gentleman to Genoa; that when they arrived there, the

lady appeared very ill, and the signora was very anxious to obtain medical attendance for her, but she said she was able to go on, therefore they proceeded: thus ends this mysterious affair."

"Mysterious, indeed!" replied Frederick, with a slight shudder.

"People here say the dead signora was wife to the signor—that the signora who fainted was his mistress, and that now, when the former is out of the way, they will marry immediately: but, poor thing! she looked much more like dying than marrying."

Here Frederick groaned audibly, and Signor Sforza, rising in alarm to feel his pulse, recommended him to lie down, and rest for two or three hours, as he had talked long enough. Frederick had not *talked*, but he felt that he had *listened* quite as long as he was able on so painful—so heartrending a subject; he therefore gladly availed himself of Signor Sforza's proposal, that he should take some rest. Bitter

were his reflections that night! Until now, he could scarcely believe that Maria's conduct was so abandoned as the world had reported; but in what other way could her continued absence from her family be accounted for, than a criminal attachment. Although he had long felt that she was lost to him—that she was no longer worthy of his regard, he had fondly hoped that she had been led into error by a wish to benefit her mother and sister, rather than by her own heart. Now that they had become independent, and that there was a home for her where she knew her presence only was wanting to make it a happy one, she had remained in a foreign country, under such circumstances as to draw upon her the severest remarks of a people, ever but too prone to view affairs of gallantry with a favourable eye. As Frederick thus revolved, he determined to dismiss the worthless Maria from his thoughts. The resolution was a wise one: he had often thus determined before, but it was not in his power to put it in practice. Maria,

lovely—gentle—amiable as he first knew her, was entwined round every fibre of his heart; whilst her apparently lifeless, though still beautiful face, as he last saw it, evinced that her career was not one of happiness or pleasure, though it might be of guilt.

Frederick's mind was not sufficiently at ease to admit of his health being restored so rapidly as it would otherwise have been. He soon became convinced that it was desirable he should try change of scene, and with the approbation of the Signor Sforza, who with tearful eyes bade him farewell, he slowly journeyed towards Florence—that lovely city where few can long remain without restoration to health and spirits, unless the disease be indeed deeply seated. Here Frederick derived such advantage from change of scene and agreeable society, that in a few months his health was entirely restored, and—except that when alone, his thoughts would still too frequently revert to her whom he had so fondly loved—his spirits also.

Mr. Danvers had promised Frederick to meet him in Italy, but had been induced to remain in Brussels, and afterwards in France, longer than he had at first intended; he now, however, wrote to fix a period for joining his brother at Florence, but ere that period arrived he was no more—he died in the course of a few hours, in consequence of imprudently eating a great deal of ice when over heated. Before Frederick could receive the information of his death, his brother must have been some time buried; consequently, it would have been utterly useless for him to proceed to Paris, where Danvers had been attended by a friend, who had purposed to accompany him into Italy. He having been several years older than Frederick, and without any of that fine taste and genius so conspicuous in the latter, their pursuits had been altogether dissimilar, which, although upon good terms, had prevented that pleasure in each other's socie' which brothers might otherwise have been supposed to have found: added to this, they had

now been many years separated, consequently, although Frederick regretted his brother's death as having snapped the only tie of affection or kindred left to him, he did not feel it so long or deeply as he would have done under other circumstances. Letters from Paris soon announced that, with the exception of some trifling legacies, Mr. Danvers had left the whole of his property to Frederick, but as it was placed in the funds, it was not necessary that he should on that account shorten his tour through Italy.

After quitting Florence, Frederick spent several months at Rome and Naples; he afterwards determined to proceed to Venice, then to journey down the Rhine; as, being accompanied by an agreeable companion who, like himself, was an excellent pedestrian, he should, he thought, derive equal pleasure and advantage from this tour; but, ere he put it in practice, he could not refrain indulging himself with again visiting the humble dwelling of which he had so long been an inmate, and as his companion had not been

in that part of Italy, they proceeded towards the interior of the republic of Genoa. Frederick was eagerly welcomed by his old host and hostess, who told him that Signor Sforza was married, and gone to live at Genoa. This was a disappointment, as from him he had hoped to learn whether any further tidings had been received of the English family who had occupied the villa; since he had no hopes of now doing so, he proceeded alone towards the convent of St. Agata, and when arrived there requested to be allowed to speak to the abbadessa on business of importance. In a few moments the superior made her appearance, when Frederick placed a small embroidered purse in her hands, containing gold, which he begged she would distribute in charity, as a small testimony of gratitude from a Protestant and an Englishman, for having, near this place, been restored to health, after a long and dangerous illness. His offering was graciously accepted; after which, he ventured to ask if he might be permitted to

see the spot where an English lady had been interred about fifteen months preceding. After the propitiatory offering she had received, the abbadessa could not refuse his request; but, as she preceded him towards the chapel, she asked several questions on the subject, none of which he could answer. He then told her he was a perfect stranger to the family, but felt a curiosity to see the place, in which an English lady under circumstances of such peculiar mystery, had been buried.

"No particular mystery attending her burial, signor, though I fear there was some attending her previous life."

At this moment they entered that part of the chapel in which the body had been placed in its last tenement. In an instant, Maria, as Frederick had then seen her, with her black veil thrown back, exposing her beautiful, but death-like features, whilst she was supported by the tall and commanding figure of her male companion—the coffin as it was lowered

into the vault—the nuns—the monks—the brilliant lights—all seemed to be again before him. His eyes were fixed in earnest gaze upon the vacant space, which his excited mind had peopled with living, though not moving images, when the abbadessa, alarmed at his appearance, asked if he were ill. Her voice in a moment broke the spell under which he laboured, and with a strong effort he recovered his self-possession, saying, the chapel had brought so forcibly to his mind a funeral he had once witnessed, that he had forgotten himself.

The superior then requested him to come forward, or he could not see the monument.

"What monument?" asked Frederick.

"The one you wished to see," replied she, pointing to a most exquisite piece of sculpture in white marble, which had, until that instant, been hid from Frederick's view by a column.

A female figure as large as life was standing in a graceful and easy attitude, in which hope and resignation were equally blended: the finely-

turned limbs, partly shaded by a beautifully sculptured drapery, appeared as if ready to spring to that heaven towards which one hand was raised; while the other meekly pressed a dove to her breast. Her head was slightly bent, and covered by a veil, which you might have fancied transparent, so exquisitely had the artist performed his part; but that, through the folds, which fell in full drapery over the face, not a feature was visible. A cherubim hovered over her head, upon which he seemed in the act of placing a crown of glory. On the tablet beneath were inscribed these words:

"Sacred to the memory of an amiable and unfortunate Englishwoman, who departed this life in the 23d year of her age. Reader, pause, and drop a tear to the memory of one, who, at that early period of life, had drunk the cup of sorrow to its bitterest dregs, but who now reposes in the full hope of rising to eternal glory."

Frederick in vain looked for name or date. Surprised equally by this circumstance, and by the beauty of the sculpture, he asked the superior by whom it had been placed there. To which she replied, that she was ignorant as himself on that subject, as she had merely received a letter from an artist of great celebrity at Florence, saying an order had been sent to him to place a very fine monument in the Chapel of St. Agata to the memory of the English lady, who had, a short time previous, been buried there; and enclosing a thousand pounds which were to be expended in masses for her soul.

"I gave leave to the sculptor," continued the abbadessa, "to erect the monument, and we have daily said masses for the repose of the unknown Englishwoman. I trust if she were guilty of any unusually great crime, that her soul is by them redeemed from purgatory; but if we are to believe that tablet, she was rather sinned against than sinning; in which case may he who brought her to an untimely end derive

benefit from those masses which he has had the grace to offer up for her soul!"

"How!" exclaimed Frederick, "untimely end? surely there is no reason to suspect that the poor young lady was poisoned?"

"Poisoned! No; Santa Maria forbid that I should insinuate such a thing. I only meant to say, that if, from the ill usage or neglect of him who ought to have protected her, her death was accelerated, I devoutly pray that the masses he has had the piety to offer up for the unfortunate lady, may likewise be received in part atonement for his own sins."

"If it be true that the lady was not kindly treated by her husband, it is extraordinary that he should erect such a monument to her memory."

"To you, signor, it will appear more so than to us, as such things are not unusual in the members of our holy church; since we frequently thus lessen the weight of crime which oppresses us;—and as the name of the lady is

not upon the monument, the signor's character, whoever he may be, stands uninjured in the eyes of the world, by this testimony to the innocence and virtue of the young creature who is buried here. Whilst such an acknowledgment, added to what I trust he has made to his confessor, will be considered partly to exculpate him in those of Heaven."

If really criminal, Frederick thought, this would prove but of little avail; but aware of the difference of their creeds in this respect, he only added, "As there is no proof of criminality, it will be but Christian charity in us to think there was none."

"True, signor, but one of our holy fathers heard from a brother, that the signor and signora, who resided with her to whom this monument is erected, were married at Geneva soon after her funeral took place; and Christian charity will scarcely extend so far as to admit of our belief that could they have been *legally united* before, they would have postponed the

ceremony until that event had taken place, after residing so many years at the villa.—But, signor, you appear unwell—will you accompany me to my apartment, and take some refreshment?"

Frederick was for a moment stunned by the information he received. Maria, then, he internally exclaimed, was married—she whom he had mourned as lost to him and to herself—whom he almost feared had been removed from the world in the midst of her criminality—was married, and probably living in splendour with her husband, courted and admired by the gay and ephemeral beings by whom she was most likely surrounded. But was she really more respectable — less guilty than when living in seclusion and in sorrow? Yet the report of her marriage might, he hoped, be untrue; and as these thoughts rapidly passed through Frederick's mind, he slowly followed the abbadessa from the chapel; when, resisting her urgent entreaties that he would take some refreshment, he quitted the convent and returned to the

Osteria, where he found his friend awaiting his arrival.

The following day, they proceeded on their projected tour. When arrived at Venice, Frederick despatched a letter of congratulation on his marriage, with a piece of plate, to Signor Sforza. On the completion of his proposed tour, Frederick determined to return to England, and to enter that sacred profession of which he had originally intended to become a member. His fortune was now so independent as to make the circumstance of his being without interest of small moment. A life of idleness was repugnant to his feelings, and in the possession of a curacy he believed he might be quite as serviceable to those around him, as in that of some considerable benefice. With these ideas, Frederick embarked for his native country, after an absence of many years, with the exception of the short period which he had spent there after his return from America. He had no home—no relatives to welcome him. To him all parts of

England seemed alike—yet he felt himself attracted towards that place which had been the home of his childhood, and the grave of his parents, more than any other; and immediately on landing at Southampton, proceeded thence to Liverpool.

On first perceiving the smoke of his native place, he felt a thrill of pleasure rush through his veins; but soon it was checked by the recollection that he was a houseless, friendless wanderer. What might not have occurred to the few who had appeared to take any interest in his fate when last in England? In an absence of some years, death had probably made strange havoc with others besides the brother who was then young, strong, and healthy, and who had now been eighteen months the tenant of a tomb! These melancholy thoughts were not likely to be dissipated by the circumstances in which the traveller was placed—he being the only passenger in the coach on a chill and gloomy evening in March.

As Frederick alighted, the drizzling rain

caused him to button close his coat, and to shiver in an air so different from that to which he had of late been accustomed. As he entered a room in which the fire had been suffered nearly to expire, he inwardly exclaimed, "This is my welcome in the place of my nativity! not one friendly hand held out to welcome me, not even the host or a servant to inquire what are the stranger's wants." But at this moment a waiter entered with lights, and apologizing for the indifferent fire, quickly produced a cheerful blaze; when, having drawn the curtains close, and placed an arm-chair by the glowing coal-fire, to which he had long been unaccustomed, the room assumed an air of comfort, to which Frederick had for some time been a stranger. His spirits were renovated by the change in outward appearances, and he soon admitted, that whatever may be the delights attending a foreign climate, nothing can be more *comfortable* than the fireside of an Englishman, on a chill, damp evening.

The following morning Frederick set out to

walk, immediately after breakfast. As the hour was too early for paying visits, he resolved to survey the environs of the place, and see what improvements had been made during his absence. Soon he fell into a train of thought, which caused him to be unobservant of all around. He was wandering in a little world of his own creation, and continued thus to muse, until he was roused by a dog jumping upon him; he pushed the intruder down—but it was not thus easily to be repulsed, and Frederick, looking at him, as he said, "Down, sir," instantly recognised an old friend. "Frisk, poor Frisk! is it you?" Frisk showed his pleasure at being acknowledged, by sundry barkings and boundings—now leaping upon Frederick, now running towards Mrs. Harley's cottage, in view of which Frederick was much surprised to find himself. "Poor Frisk, your mistress, then, is still there, I suppose; I thought she would have gone from this humble abode."

Frisk, who had been a present from Frederick to Mrs. Harley, now by his capering backward and forward, wagging his tail, and numerous little quick short barks, said as plainly as dog could say, "Come to my mistress, and ask all the questions you wish answered, of those who can reply more intelligibly than I can."

The invitation was understood and accepted, and Frederick proceeded towards the house. Twice he raised the knocker, and twice it fell almost noiseless on the door; a third time he made a more strenuous effort, and succeeded in the attempt. In reply to the inquiry if Mrs. Harley were at home, the servant instantly threw open the door of the room in which she was seated. A tall but slight female form was leaning over her, as if in the act of rendering some assistance. Frederick advanced, the figure turned round, and the eyes of Maria Harley and Frederick Danvers met! The effect on both was almost electrical; his first impulse was to rush towards her—his next to remain

rooted to the spot on which he stood, with cheeks flushed, and eyes almost starting from their sockets, as he vainly made an effort to apologize for his intrusion.

Maria's before pallid features assumed the hue of death, her lips were compressed, her eyes closed, and, as she caught her mother's chair for support, she would have fallen to the ground, had not Frederick darted forward to her assistance. Mrs. Harley, who was only just recovered from a severe rheumatic fever, and who had not regained the full use of her limbs, was unable to offer any assistance, but in extreme agitation and alarm, called out loudly for help; in an instant Ellen was in the room, and summoning other attendants, Frederick was soon released from his too painfully-pleasing burden. That Maria, whom he had supposed living in luxury and affluence with her husband, should be at the cottage of her mother, astonished him beyond expression; he almost doubted his own senses,

and felt half inclined to believe they had deceived him, and that he had taken some other form for that of Maria Harley, at the convent of St. Agata; he looked again at the lifeless figure before him, and felt that he never could have mistaken any other being for that which was so deeply impressed upon his heart. Rapidly these thoughts passed through his mind, when, as Maria quickly showed symptoms of returning consciousness, he was called upon to reply to the kind inquiries of Mrs. Harley, who no sooner got the better of those fears, occasioned by her daughter's swooning, than she expressed her pleasure at again seeing her young friend, after an absence from England of so many years.

Frederick, still much agitated by his unexpected *rencontre* with Maria, was scarcely able to express his thanks for her kind reception, or his regret at seeing her so great a sufferer from ill health. Upon his making the latter observation, she replied, "that a gracious Pro-

vidence had been pleased to give her strength to overcome a very severe illness, with the assistance and unceasing attention of two of the best of daughters."

Maria had now recovered so far as to be enabled to quit the room, with the assistance of Ellen, who soon returned, saying; her sister thought a little rest would restore her, if left quite alone.

"Maria is sadly altered, Mr. Danvers, do you not think so?" asked her anxious mother.

Altered, indeed, thought Frederick, from the gay, blooming, life-inspiring Maria Harley, whom he had once known; but perceiving that Mrs. Harley awaited his answer, he replied, "So many years have elapsed since Miss Harley and I parted, that it is natural she should appear to me somewhat altered; no doubt I must be as much so in her eyes. We were then very young; we have both since that period seen much of the world, probably may

have gone through some trials, and are likely to be entirely changed, not only in appearance, but in feeling, from the gay lively young people of that period."

"Maria was formerly extremely cheerful," said Mrs. Harley, "I wish I could see her so again, but her health is very delicate indeed, and my illness has much added to that delicacy, I fear."

"You are so much improved, dear mamma, that I hope, when the season is a little more advanced, you will entirely recover your strength, and then Maria will have less cause for uneasiness. My mother has suffered severely during the whole winter from a rheumatic fever; I know not what would have become of us, but for the strength of mind and resolution of our beloved Maria, who, notwithstanding her own evidently delicate state of health, has been, next to Heaven, our support through that and every preceding affliction. As for me,"

she continued, smiling through her tearful eyes, "I have no presence of mind or self-command, when in distress."

"Do not speak thus of yourself, my love, you are always kind, attentive, and affectionate; but, Mr. Danvers, we are very selfish, thus to think of ourselves only; yet, believe me, your sorrows and your welfare have not been unheeded by us, though we have had no opportunity of hearing where you were; I trust, after an absence of so many years from your native country, you are returned with an intention of making it your future residence."

To this Mr. Danvers replied by informing her of his intention to enter the church. Mrs. Harley expressed her pleasure at this determination, and hoped he might fix himself in his old neighbourhood.

"That, my dear madam, is, you must be aware, very uncertain; there are painful and pleasurable sensations, which mingle in my breast, whenever I return to the home of my

earliest years; but I must acknowledge, that from various causes, the former preponderate so much, as to leave me little wish to make Lancashire my permanent residence."

"I grieve to hear you say so, my young friend," replied Mrs. Harley; "I had hoped that your youth at the time of our misfortunes, added to your being now placed in independence, would have totally altered your feelings in this respect; when you have been longer in England, I still hope it may prove so."

Frederick then informed Mrs. Harley, that it would be necessary for him to return to Oxford, and that, as he should only be a few days longer in Lancashire, he feared he should not be able again to see her, but should take that opportunity of visiting Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbey, to whose house he immediately proceeded.

He found them in the enjoyment of health and apparent happiness; two fine children were in the room, one in its mother's arms, the other

at her feet. Mr. Ormsbey expressed and felt sincere pleasure at the return of his old friend, and still more to hear that he purposed to remain in England. He urged Frederick to partake their simple, though comfortable dinner, to which he assented, in the hope of receiving information on a subject, which still deeply interested him.

After dinner, when Mrs. Ormsbey retired to her nursery, Mr. Danvers inquired if Miss Harley had returned to her mother, soon after the latter's becoming possessed of the little independence which remained, when her late husband's affairs were finally settled.

"By no means," replied Mr. Ormsbey, "Mrs. Harley, as I think you know, requested her to resign her situation, and return home without delay; to which she received an answer from Maria, expressing her astonishment and joy at your escape from a watery grave, as likewise the most heartfelt gratitude to you for having, by your indefatigable exertions re-

moved every stain from the honour of her father, and your own, by the payment of their debts, and for placing her remaining parent in independence, which circumstances of the most *peculiar* and *powerful nature,* prevented the possibility of her then participating in, though she should look forward to the moment when she might be enabled to do so, as one of the happiest of her future life. Poor Mrs. Harley felt her daughter's refusal to return home most deeply; her regret on this subject was so great, that it led to a general debility of system, which, when her daughter did at last return, was not to be overcome, but ended in a violent rheumatic fever, during which we had little hope of her life being spared. Happily, however, the excellent lady's constitution struggled through it, very much aided, certainly, by the astonishing exertions of her eldest daughter, who, although she returned in so delicate a state of health, as to cause great apprehension in her friends, went through such fatigue of

mind and body, as few, even strong and healthy persons, could have done."

"Of course, since Miss Harley's return, she has accounted to her friends for her prolonged absence?"

"Never, not even to her mother; and I regret to say, that in consequence of the rumours, which you may recollect were in circulation to her disadvantage, when you were last in this neighbourhood, being by this means strengthened, very few of their old friends visit at the cottage; this Maria feels keenly, not on her own account, I really believe, for there is a loftiness of mind about her, which, I think, renders her inaccessible to all selfish feeling, but she regrets that her mother should not see all whom she has been accustomed to receive attention from; and feels still more on her sister Ellen's account, since young women of reputation do not like to be seen with them. My sisters have thought it right to decline going there, ever since Maria's return, and though

I am of opinion, that circumstanced as they were, it was being unnecessarily scrupulous, I could not with propriety urge them to do otherwise."

"Oh, Maria, how art thou fallen!" exclaimed Frederick.

"Indeed I fear she is," repeated Mr. Ormsbey, "though, when I see her exemplary conduct towards her mother, I am frequently inclined to doubt whether the world may not have judged too harshly."

"At any rate," said Frederick, "her life is now one of purity, and who can presume to say that it ever was otherwise? The world may suspect, but it can only suspect, and under such circumstances, I consider that it is the duty of her friends and connexions to act as if they believed her conduct blameless; and you, as their only male protector should be particularly cautious not to countenance a rumour to her disadvantage, since by so doing you will probably ruin the prospects of her lovely young sister."

"I have often thought so myself, but what can I do?"

"What you now can do, I know not; but when the Miss Ormsbeys declined to visit at the cottage, you should have told them they must then cease to visit you, since your wife's sister must be proved guilty ere she was treated as such by your friends: this conduct on your part would probably have saved you much future uneasiness."

Ormsbey, who, amiable and kind-hearted, had but little resolution or firmness of character, acknowledged that he believed such would have been a proper line of conduct; but he feared it was now too late. When Harriet returned to the room, the conversation changed, and the subject was not again reverted to during Frederick's stay.

What Maria had suffered, after her restoration from the swoon with which she was seized, none surmised. To see again him who had possessed her heart, ere she knew what love

was, whose conduct in every situation had been such as to cause the most unqualified admiration in all who spoke of him—to see him thus unexpectedly—to feel his eyes encounter hers—and at the same moment to be aware that she was no longer an object of regard—of respect, to him who had once so fondly loved her: the mental agony of Maria at that moment none could know—she hoped and believed that no one suspected it; she could bear her misery, but she could not bear that those she loved should know how much she suffered.

Maria's health became still more delicate from this period, and as the spring advanced, she continued daily to droop more and more. The cheering influence of bright sunny days seemed to renovate Mrs. Harley's before feeble frame, and she was scarcely aware of her daughter's increasing indisposition, until roused to observation by her medical man, recommending Miss Harley to try change of scene and sea air, without delay. She thanked him with a lan-

guid smile, saying she did not require any change; but Mrs. Harley's fears, which had before been somewhat lulled, were now too strongly awakened to admit of a day's delay. The following morning the family from the cottage started for Beaumaris, in North Wales, where, after sojourning a few weeks, the pure sea-breezes appeared to have invigorated the apparently debilitated system of Maria so much, as to give her mother and sister cause to hope her ultimate, and not distant restoration to health. Mrs. Harley herself derived such advantage from the change, that she soon lost every symptom of indisposition, and was enabled to enjoy a walk on the beach, or a drive into the adjacent country once more.

One day Maria had rambled alone on the sea shore, until fatigued she seated herself upon a rock, when opening a book she had taken out, she soon forgot all that was passing around her in the interest of the work she was perusing.

Whilst thus occupied, her ear caught the sound of approaching feet, but she was too much absorbed by her employment to raise her eyes, until she heard some one close to her; she then looked up, and at that moment her eyes encountered those of Frederick Danvers! With a flushed countenance, he touched his hat, and walked quickly forward without speaking. This coldness—this almost contemptuous treatment—was too much for the still weak state of Maria's spirits to bear with composure, and she burst into a flood of tears. Frederick, ere he turned a corner of the cliff which would hide her from his view, ventured to give a furtive glance around—that glance rivetted him to the spot—he beheld Maria weeping—was it, could it be on his account that her tears flowed? Was she so much hurt by his coldness as to grieve for it thus evidently? At this idea, as it shot across his mind, all recollection of her past conduct was for the moment erased. Maria

Harley, shedding tears at his unkindness, was placed again before him in innocence and beauty, and in an instant Frederick was at her side.

"Maria—Miss Harley!" he said; she sobbed aloud. He took her passive hand in his—he pressed it to his lips, to his throbbing heart, as he threw himself at her side; then covering his face with his hands, he exclaimed, in bitter agony, "Oh! Maria, why do we meet thus? why art thou thus fallen?—thou, who wert scarcely lower than the angels! I loved—I adored thee; for thee I could have borne any, and every suffering that human nature could endure, and have thought myself amply rewarded by thy love. Poverty—pain—death itself—would have been bliss, compared with what I felt when I heard that thou wert lost to virtue." Maria shuddered as he thus continued: "I have tried, Maria, in various climes to chase thy image from my heart; I have wandered in the beautiful valleys and on the majestic mountains of Switzerland—amid the classic remains

of Italy—I have climbed the Alps, and pursued the track of the hardy mountaineers, for months together—but all was in vain; whether surrounded by the magnificence of nature or that of art—in society or in solitude—the image of Maria Harley, such as I once knew her, was the companion of my heart, the prominent picture in my mind. Oh! Maria, speak to me—tell me I have been deceived—say to me that you are the same Maria Harley whom I so tenderly loved and looked up to, as the most perfect of human beings."

Maria's frame shook with emotion during Frederick's impassioned and rapid utterance of this address; she appeared once or twice to attempt to interrupt him, but again her sobs seemed almost to suffocate her. Frederick had ceased to speak, appearing overwhelmed with the violence of his own feelings: she withdrew the handkerchief from her face, and at length made a powerful and successful effort to reply.

"Mr. Danvers," she said, "I am, I must ac-

knowledge, surprised that you should address me in this way. I am aware of no right which you can claim to my confidence, beyond that of friendship. When the mutual misfortunes of our families took place, I told you there must be an end of that dream of happiness"—her voice faltered as she uttered these words—"which we had foolishly indulged. My path of duty was plainly marked out—married happiness must to me be a stranger—I had duties to perform which admitted no thought of love that was not connected with my mother and sisters. From the moment I told you this, I conceive myself to have been free from any obligation to account to you for my actions—whether they have been guilty or meritorious, I appeal not to man for judgment. If the former, think you not I am sufficiently punished for my failings, by seeing not only that I am looked upon with contempt by those who have formerly known me, but likewise that my dear mother and sister are sufferers for my sake? Is it neces-

sary that *you* should add your censures to those of the rest of the world? You tell me you have loved me—that you still love me: you are mistaken, Mr. Danvers—were your love real, you would not believe the injurious reports you may have heard. Your conviction of my truth and honour would be such, that nothing could shake it—not even your own eyes, after knowing me as you did for eighteen years, when every thought of my heart was laid open to you. All idea of love was necessarily forbidden by my situation; but acknowledging friendship only for Frederick Danvers, there lives not the being who could for an instant have caused me to suspect *his* honour or integrity—sooner should I have doubted my own eyes and ears, than have doubted the estimable qualities of one whom I had known so thoroughly, and of whose worth I was so confident—but *woman's faith* is not *man's faith.*"

As Maria thus expressed herself, her voice by degrees became steady, and her manner, though

gentle, firm and impressive. Frederick gazed earnestly upon her speaking features, and as she ceased, he said, "Maria, I have not only heard reports in England to your prejudice, but I have heard of and seen you in Italy—in the convent of St. Agata. I will not shock your ears by repeating what I *there* heard; but so entire is still my reliance on the rectitude of your principles, that if you will say to me, 'Frederick, I am innocent,' I will not only give the most unqualified belief to your assertion, but promise that a doubt shall never again be expressed by me, nor allowed to arise in my mind; and that my future life shall be devoted to endeavouring to regain that place in your affections, which you once gave me reason to hope I had obtained, or (should I be so fortunate as to succeed in my endeavour) in striving to erase from your memory every painful feeling, and placing you in possession of that domestic happiness which you are so well formed to enjoy and to bestow. If, on the con-

trary, you are silent to this appeal, I will endeavour to bear my disappointment and grief, unsuspected by the world. I will pray for you, Maria—I will pity, and I must still love; for assured I am, that if you have erred, it was from a mistaken sense of duty, and not from inclination; but in this case"—his trembling lips could scarcely pronounce the words—"we must never meet more."

"Frederick!" exclaimed Maria, raising her tearful eyes to heaven, with a look of gratitude and joy, "you have conquered—*I am entirely innocent;* this moment is the happiest I have known for years—the world's contumely I could bear, but that you should believe me capable of such conduct, cut me to the heart. I grieved deeply for your supposed death—but then I had the satisfaction of believing it possible that you might still be allowed to watch over me: but when I found that you believed me a worthless, despicable being, my heart was indeed lacerated. From this moment we are friends—

affectionate and confiding friends; but we can be nothing more—all idea of matrimony is forbidden me by the necessity of continuing to be silent respecting the proceedings of the last few years of my life."

"But, dearest Maria, give me leave to hope that you may in time be induced to change this resolution. I will give you my most solemn assurance that a doubt of your honour and purity will never more arise in my bosom."

"So you now believe, but I am of opinion that there can be no domestic happiness where there is not entire confidence between man and wife; therefore say nothing more on that subject, but accompany me to see my mother, and feel satisfied in having, by your reliance on my word, restored me to a sense of happiness which has long been a stranger to my breast."

It is unnecessary to repeat any further particulars of the conversation between Frederick and Maria, as he attended her home; it may easily be imagined to consist of endeavours on

his part to shake her determination, and of declarations on hers to abide by it.

Mrs. Harley and Ellen received with pleasure the visiter whom Maria announced to them; and in her occasionally radiant smile and brilliant eye, Ellen saw, what confirmed her former suspicions, that there had once been an attachment between her sister and Mr. Danvers.

The following morning, at an early hour, Frederick was once more at Mrs. Harley's door. Maria was alone when he entered, of which he took advantage by again reverting to the subject next his heart; and after a conference of nearly two hours, succeeded so far in his suit that she consented to write to the only individual who could absolve her from her promise, and give her leave to state all that had occurred to him and to her mother, which she should make her earnest request. Should this individual accede to her wish, she promised to become his wife. If otherwise, she trusted he

would importune her no further, as all hope must be at an end.

Frederick was obliged reluctantly to accede to this resolution, trusting that no one could be so cruel as to deprive such a gifted and inestimable woman as Maria Harley of every prospect of domestic felicity. After this arrangement, Maria said she should request Frederick to quit Beaumaris, and to see her no more until an answer arrived from her friend, which, as he was abroad, could not take place for at least four months, or probably six, from that time. Frederick, although not without great regret, acquiesced in Maria's wish that he should leave her; and with a heart lightened of the greatest part of that weight of sorrow which had for many years overwhelmed it, bade her adieu.

Five months expired ere Frederick, who was pursuing his studies at Oxford, received a letter from Maria, informing him that she had obtained permission from her friend on the continent to communicate to her mother and him-

self all those extraordinary circumstances which had hitherto been hidden in her own bosom. Frederick received this joyful intimation a short time previous to a college vacation. The happiness which he derived from an annunciation, which gave him the prospect of a speedy union with one whom he had so long, and so tenderly, loved, was such as to cause the intervening time to fly with unusual rapidity. He had before ceased to have a doubt of his beloved Maria's purity; and although interested in every thing concerning her, he was above that feeling of curiosity which would have caused many to be impatient for the development of the mysterious events which had taken place.

As soon as Frederick could quit Oxford, he started for B——. It is unnecessary to state that he met with a cordial reception from the inhabitants of the cottage, and from none more openly and unaffectedly so than Maria herself, whom he rejoiced to see looking in very much better health than when they had parted. The

bloom in her cheeks was still of the most delicate hue, but there were faint traces of the rose of Lancaster, where that of York had alone been visible. Her eyes were lighted up by an expression of happiness which, if before apparent, had been too evanescent to create that pleasure in those to whom she was most dear, which its cheerful and brilliant gleam now shed around. A smile of indescribable sweetness encircled her beautiful mouth, and Frederick thought, as he gazed upon her, that he had never seen so much to admire and interest, in the ever-changeful countenance and delicate complexion of Maria, as at this time:—not even when in the possession of the most brilliant and unclouded beauty.

Although allowance must be made for the feelings of an ardent lover, Frederick, it must be admitted, was not far wrong in his opinion of the attraction of Maria's present appearance. What she had lost in brilliance of beauty she had gained in expression—in dignity. Sorrow

had chastened, whilst it had elevated her soul; and this elevation, though the sorrow which increased it had ceased, still remained, and shone through every feature.

It was not until the morning following Frederick's arrival at B——, that Maria made him a participator in the knowledge of those distressing events which had weighed so heavily on her spirits, and which had been so prejudicial to her fame. Some hours elapsed ere they joined Mrs. Harley and Ellen. What passed during this period was known only to the former, since Maria's sisters were not to be admitted to that confidence, which she had with difficulty gained leave to repose in her mother and future husband; but the countenance of Maria bore evident marks of recent and strong emotion, whilst Frederick gazed upon her with a mingled expression of love, pity, and admiration. His voice when addressing her sounded more soft and gentle than before, and in his manner there was if possible a still more striking delicacy and re-

spectful tenderness than heretofore had been apparent.

Mr. and Mrs. Ormsbey had expressed considerable surprise that Frederick should have renewed his addresses to Maria, while such a cloud obscured her fame; they were equally surprised and displeased that she should have obtained permission to place full confidence in Mrs. Harley and Mr. Danvers, whilst they were to remain in ignorance. Harriet felt offended that she was not confided in, when others were so; and her husband, who would otherwise have been perfectly satisfied to remain uninformed on the subject, at her instigation began to think they had been treated with less confidence than was due to them. Thus feeling, Mrs. Ormsbey asked Ellen, "If she was not to be intrusted with this wonderful secret?"

"No," replied Ellen, "whatever it may be, it is evidently something which ought to be intrusted to as few persons as possible; I know

Maria would keep nothing from me, that would give me pleasure to hear, and which she is at liberty to relate; that this secret, as you call it, whatever it may be, would do neither, I feel assured, therefore I am quite satisfied to remain in ignorance."

"Have you no wish to know with whom Maria was—in what country—and what she was doing during so long a period?"

"I cannot say I have *no* curiosity, but since I am not told these things, I do not doubt it is better I should remain without such knowledge."

"Surely, Ellen," added Harriet, pettishly, "you would like to *ascertain* that your *idol's* conduct has been as irreproachable as you fancy it to have been?"

"I could never be more assured of it than I now am, Harriet; I believe Maria to be one of the most perfect of created beings; I want no further proofs than those I have long had, and for your own sake only, I regret that you should

suffer ideas and doubts, equally beneath you to utter, as beneath her of whom you utter them, to obtain a place in your bosom."

Ellen then rising in displeasure, was going to quit the house, when Harriet besought her to stay, and acknowledged that she was wrong in speaking thus of her sister, but she could not help feeling hurt that she was not empowered more fully to deny the truth of those rumours, which had distressed them all so much. Ellen, soon appeased by her sister's apology, proceeded to execute the commission with which she was charged, which was to request Mr. Ormsbey and Harriet to return with her, and spend the evening at Mrs. Harley's; to this they readily acceded, and in the society of Mr. Danvers, and their own amiable relatives, forgot the little doubts and jealousies which had before assailed them.

As it was necessary that Frederick should remain a short time longer at college ere he could take orders, Maria would not consent

to their union until that period had expired. He had endeavoured to combat that resolution, but finding that she was not to be prevailed upon to accede to his wish for their nuptials to take place sooner, he returned alone to Oxford, at the termination of the vacation.

At length, the anxiously looked for period arrived, which was to unite the hands of those whose hearts had for so many years been entwined. They were married at the parish church of B——, where Mr. Ormsbey performed the ceremony, which was attended only by her sisters, the friendly Mr. Jones, and his amiable wife, who came from town to act as father to his favourite cousin.

Frederick having obtained a curacy, with the loan of the rectory-house, in a pleasant situation in Derbyshire, set out for that place immediately after his marriage, where they were in a few weeks joined by Mrs. Harley and her youngest daughter.

Within three months after that event took

place, which had made him the happiest of men, Mr. Danvers was much surprised to receive an appointment from the Earl of Melcombe, to a valuable living within three miles of Melcombe Castle. Having no acquaintance whatever with his lordship, he was totally at a loss to account for the circumstance. On the following day, Maria received a letter from her mysterious friend, informing her, that through his influence Mr. Danvers would immediately be appointed to the rectory of Melcombe, just become vacant by the death of my father; and likewise that Lord and Lady Melcombe, from their family connexion with himself, were informed of all that was requisite they should know, to enable them to appreciate fully the estimable character of the individuals who were likely to reside in their immediate vicinity. Mr. and Mrs. Danvers were thus placed in possession of an income, more than adequate to their moderate wishes.

The rectory-house of Melcombe was replete with

every comfort and convenience, along with many elegancies not usually found in the residence of a country clergyman, since, as I formerly mentioned, it had been built for a younger brother of the late earl's, who resided there prior to my father's becoming possessed of the living. It was beautifully situated, within a mile of Lord Melcombe's magnificent park, and in a country abounding in fine and romantic scenery.

From the moment of Maria's first interview with the Countess, she found in her a warm friend and strenuous advocate; for that lady well knew that, so far from having deserved the slightest censure, Maria's conduct had been praiseworthy beyond expression; that she had acted most nobly, in such trying situations, as few could have had resolution to contend with; and her ladyship, not merely from being highly born and highly allied, but still more from the strict propriety of her own conduct, and the possession of every feminine virtue, added to being rigidly scrupulous with

regard to the character and general conduct of those whom she received at her house, held a very high station in the opinions, not only of those in her own county, but even amongst the gay and fashionable persons of rank who assembled in the metropolis. Consequently, to be known and received at Melcombe Castle was an honour of which the most nobly born might be proud, and to which no vicious or doubtful character durst aspire. When such a woman took Mrs. Danvers into her house, and admitted her into her intimacy, every doubt was at an end—every rumour to her disadvantage was silenced. Mrs. Harley and Ellen soon became the occupiers of a pretty cottage at a short distance from the rectory, happy in the society of a daughter and sister whom they almost equally loved and admired.

A few years after the events which I have narrated took place, I was a visiter at Melcombe Castle, where I had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Danvers. Lady Melcombe gave me those par-

ticulars of their history which she was at liberty to communicate, which raised them so much in my estimation, as to make me most anxious to gain a place in their esteem; in this I was fortunate enough to succeed so far, as not only to hear from themselves nearly all the events I have related, but to have the happiness of reckoning them amongst my best and most intimate friends.

Such a character as Mrs. Danvers has been described, it is scarcely necessary to say, shone as much in the character of a wife and mother, as she had before done in that of a daughter and sister. At the time of which I speak, she had three lovely children, a boy and two girls, her mother then resided chiefly with her, as her fascinating sister had, though with some difficulty, been prevailed upon by a gentleman of good fortune and unexceptionable character, to leave the home in which she could equally be the companion of that parent, whose increasing years required more attention, and enjoy the society of a sister whom she continued

to look upon as the most perfect of human beings.

At length, however, Mr. Gordon's constancy, assiduity, and numerous excellent qualities, added to Mrs. Harley's declaration of an intention of dividing her time amongst her daughters, induced Ellen to consent to an union, which has not only proved in every respect eligible for herself, but has given an agreeable and highly esteemed relative to her mother and sisters.

Thus far had I written when the death of Mr. Glanville took place; immediately after which a letter was forwarded to Mrs. Danvers, which he had penned a short time prior to his decease, saying, "that he no longer required any concealment from her, since that son, for whose sake he was most anxious that not a breath of suspicion should attach to his name, was no more, and as all who were implicated in the melancholy history were now dead, she was at full liberty to relate it to her friends;" she

consequently recited to me the following narrative:

At an early period of life, the Earl of Orberry was united to a beautiful Italian girl of high rank, but, as is most usual in Italy, wellnigh portionless. One son and a daughter were the sole fruits of this union; the former was doted upon by his father, as the being on whom all his hopes depended for the continuance of that noble race whence he sprung; while the latter was little regarded by him, and still less by her young, vain, and thoughtless mother, who, in the lovely child, already dreaded a competitor for the admiration of the gay throng by whom she was constantly surrounded.

The Countess of Orberry being a Catholic, it had been agreed that her daughters should be brought up in the same faith, and, as the earl and herself, immersed in a vortex of gaiety, lived fully up to the extent of their immense income, they readily acceded to a hint from Father Placci, that the little Con-

stantia would be best provided for in a convent. Thus, while still an infant, the fate of the innocent child was decided, and as the Confessor firmly believed, in a way to ensure her happiness here and hereafter.

Accustomed to kindness and affection from Father Piacci alone, Constantia loved him as a parent, whilst for her real parents she felt none of that attachment usual in children. Naturally of a melancholy temperament, and unused to any society, except that of the confessor, she was quite unlike others of her own age. Her acquirements, particularly in languages, were surprising, but her reading, confined almost entirely to religious works, gave her no knowledge of that world in which it was not designed that she should ever mix.

Lady Constantia was ten years of age when she quitted England for a convent in Italy. One person alone she left with regret, this was her young brother, who, gay and volatile as his sister was grave and sedate, had, during

his vacations from Eton, equally tormented her by his boyish tricks, and pleased her by his affectionate regret for having annoyed her.

Father Piacci, who regarded his young charge almost as if she were his own child, resolved to remain in Italy, and officiate in the convent to which Lady Constantia was to be consigned, where Lady Orberry's connexions possessed powerful influence. There did Constantia pass seven years in a kind of tranquil and melancholy happiness peculiarly suited to her natural temperament. When she breathed the soft and balmy air of her mother's native country—when she fixed her full and melting eyes upon the clear expanse of blue above her head—when she heard the melodious voices of those around her raised in notes of praise towards their Creator, or attuned in affectionate kindness towards herself, she felt that she had gained the home in which she could alone know happiness; and, instead of looking forward with dread to the moment which should

sever her entirely from the world, as was the case with many of her companions, she anticipated it as the completion of her most ardent wish!

The novitiate of Lady Constantia had already commenced, when she received an intimation of the death of her brother after a few hours' illness. She grieved deeply for his loss, but thought not of the change it would make in her own prospects, since the title and estates of Orberry, in default of male issue, descended in the female line.

Their hitherto neglected daughter now became an object of the first importance to Lord and Lady Orberry, and instead of dedicating herself to a life of religious seclusion, she was called upon to take her station amongst the noble and wealthy in the land of her nativity.

Lady Constantia received the mandate to return with heartfelt grief—she had known little more of her parents than an occasional cold embrace—could she, therefore, feel plea-

sure in returning to them, and in quitting those by whom she modestly thought that she was more than appreciated? No; she felt that in the seclusion of a convent alone could her happiness be ensured, and, in the hope of being permitted to return, with a full heart tore herself from the embraces of her friends.

Father Piacci, who accompanied her to England, while he deeply regretted the change in her position, endeavoured to reconcile her to mingling in that world whence he had heretofore wished to divert her thoughts: but the present task was much more difficult than the former, since he then only assisted the natural bent of her mind, while he now strove to turn it when already firmly fixed in a totally opposite direction.

Lord Orberry received his daughter with a mixture of pleasure and pain, since her return brought more forcibly to his remembrance the loss of his beloved son, which he still deeply lamented; but Lady Orberry, whom no do-

mestic affliction could check in the gay career she was following, was then visiting a noble family, on the celebration of the christening of its heir. She returned to Orford Castle, attended by a group of fashionable friends, when coldly saluting her daughter, and expressing surprise at her growth, she proceeded to her own apartments.

At this time Lady Orberry appeared only to have gained that maturity of beauty, which is frequently more admired than those charms of youth which owe much of their effect to their entire *fraîcheur;* but although perfectly conscious of what she believed the superiority of her own claims to admiration, she viewed with displeasure those of her daughter. Yet so different was their style of beauty, that they might have shone as two brilliant stars in the same hemisphere, without the rays of one intersecting those of the other; for the countess, whose figure was *petite*, was gay, brilliant, attractive, and alluring, equally in manner as in person; while her

daughter, tall and commanding in appearance, with features formed in nature's finest mould—a complexion which, fair as alabaster, was so slightly tinged with colour, that, but for the almost heavenly expression of her full, dark eye, and that of a countenance varying with each word she uttered, she might have been mistaken for one of those fine Grecian statues which have been for ages the admiration and wonder of the world. But, while the beauty of Lady Constantia was such as to draw upon the admiring gaze of all by whom she was seen, there was in her retiring manner—in her high and polished forehead—in her full, tender, and melancholy eye—in her pale and almost passionless countenance—a serious yet attractive dignity of expression, totally unlike those by whom she was surrounded. She seemed, in fact, as if mixing with sublunary beings, while her mind was engaged in a sphere more suited to its powers.

That such a person was totally unfitted for

the career of gaiety and dissipation in which her mother was immersed, may be supposed. Ardently did she wish to be restored to the tranquillity of the convent; but fully aware that her first duty was to obey the wishes of her parents, she resigned herself entirely to their guidance.

The Countess of Orberry's levity of conduct had long excited the animadversion of her friends; but, although entering in the fullest extent into the reprehensible fashion of *cicisbeoism*, her husband, and consequently the rest of the world, believed her perfectly free from criminality in thought or deed; but who shall dare to touch the brink of ruin, and yet say, "I will go no further." Lady Orberry may have said—may have thought this, but her actions contradicted such words and thoughts; for before the termination of her daughter's first season in town, she eloped with the gentleman who had long been her constant attendant!

Lord Orberry's affection for his thoughtless

wife had been chilled by her giddiness and indifference; yet he felt the blow which now fell upon him with such extreme violence, that for a time it was feared reason might desert its throne: but his daughter, by her never-ceasing attention—by the gentleness and sweetness of her accents—by her unrepining yet keenly feeling manner—induced him apparently to overcome the excessive agony with which his dishonour had overwhelmed him. While Lady Constantia, for her father's sake, and in his presence, exerted every nerve to appear but little affected by her mother's misconduct, it had sunk into her pure mind with an effect that to the good Father Piacci appeared quite appalling. With him did her tears flow for the culpability of a mother; her fine eyes, which were formerly raised with so sweet an expression, were now fixed upon the ground—her open countenance, the index to a mind that had never suspected impurity in another, had lost that heavenly calmness of expression which

seemed to ally her with angelic rather than human beings. She lamented—oh! how deeply —for her wretched mother. She grieved for her dishonoured father; and she most acutely felt her own deep degradation, in being held up to the scorn of the world as the daughter of an adultress!

When Lord Orberry had overcome the first effects of the severe blow he had received, Lady Constantia entreated his permission to return to her convent, and there be permitted to take the veil, according to her original destination, since her cousin, Augustus Orville, was qualified to confer much more honour on his family and on the peerage, than one like herself, who felt most happy in the seclusion of a cloister.

"What!" said the earl, "will you, too, forsake me, Constantia?"

"Forgive me, dearest father," she replied; "my request was, I fear, selfish; suffer me, then, to live with you in the retirement of the country, and in your society, and that of Father

Piacci, I will endeavour to forget that I have had cause for grief; but ask me not again to enter that fatal—fearful vortex of gaiety."

"Remain with me, Constantia, and from this moment you shall be mistress of your own actions—only do not, just as I have learned the value of such a daughter, desert me."

In Orford Castle Lord Orberry and his daughter resided, in utter seclusion from the world, for many months after the elopement of the countess; in the course of which time he obtained a divorce, when she immediately married her seducer, and during the remainder of her short and unhappy life, lived in comparative poverty and retirement from that gaiety in which she had delighted.

Lady Constantia regained her usual calm serenity of countenance and manner, but the arrow poisoned by a mother's guilt had struck deep into her highly sensitive heart, where it rankled still more from the wound being apparently healed.

Lord Orberry had a twin-brother, to whom he was particularly attached, who having been with his only son at Athens, at the period of Lady Orberry's elopement, had not been able to return to England until there was no longer occasion for his advice or assistance. With sincere pleasure did his lordship learn that his brother and nephew were coming to Orford Castle; their society would, he felt, be a source of gratification to himself, and would, he trusted, tend towards chasing away part of that melancholy which his daughter evinced. He likewise hoped, that two young persons so engaging in every respect as his nephew Augustus, and Constantia, could scarcely be thrown into each other's society, apart from the rest of the world, without imbibing a mutual attachment. In the fond anticipation of such a result was the proposed visit gladly accepted by the earl, though he prudently resolved not to give his daughter the slightest hint on the subject.

Mr. Orville strongly resembled the earl,

although his figure was more commanding, and his countenance more indicative of firmness of character, added to a dignity of manner and appearance, occasionally allied to *hauteur.*

Augustus Orville was in person and character, a mixture of the most striking features in his father and uncle; when offended he was, like Mr. Orville, haughty and unbending; when pleased, like the earl, at a similar period of life, gay, graceful, and witty. With a handsome face, good figure, elegant manners, and a fine fortune, derived from his mother, it may be supposed that Augustus was a welcome visiter whenever he appeared, and he might be excused, if at the age of two-and-twenty, he believed himself to be almost irresistible.

The brothers had not met for some years; the earl, no longer gay, witty, and versatile, had felt the dishonour inflicted upon him by his wife so deeply, that, although never reverted to in conversation, it had evidently made a deep inroad on his constitution. Mr. Orville was

but little altered, since, much as he had lamented the death of an amiable wife, the time which had elapsed, and the happiness he enjoyed in seeing his son all he wished, had entirely restored his spirits.

Two young persons could scarcely appear more dissimilar in every respect, than the cousins; yet this very difference seemed, in the eyes of their parents, to make them more calculated for each other. The calm and serious beauty of Constantia, combined with a purity of mind and conversation, which almost placed her above humanity, attracted the attention, and caused surprise in Augustus; while his lively sallies, varied by an occasional dignity and *hauteur*, imbibed from his father, interested her by their contrarieties. With mutual pleasure the brothers beheld the increasing intimacy of their offspring, auguring from it all they wished.

The party at Orford Castle, received at this period an augmentation that was most agreeable to all there, in the person of a ward of Mr.

Orville's, who was likewise the most intimate and valued friend of his son. Henry Desmond was the only descendant of an ancient but decayed family; left by the death of his parents, with a very small fortune, to the care of Mr. Orville, that gentleman had educated him with his son, and almost loved him equally as if he had really been such.

With natural talents of the highest order, cultivated in the best possible manner, Henry Desmond was possessed of every qualification and accomplishment that could adorn a gentleman and a scholar. Nature had indeed been a very prodigal towards him, since a very fine person was combined with strong sense, a lively imagination, a brilliant wit, and a depth of feeling, which caused him to check the brightest sally, if likely to give pain to the most insignificant being. As the sun itself is not without spots, so Desmond, with all his fine and noble qualities, was not totally free from one dark shade: guileless himself, he suspected not guile

in another; but, if deceived, in the slightest degree, where he confided, he not only felt aggrieved, but resented it with a degree of warmth, scarcely pardonable in one destined, as he was, for the church; a fine living, in Lord Orberry's gift being promised him, when old enough to take orders.

Lady Constantia spent some hours daily with Father Piacci, devoting the remainder of her time to music or drawing, while her father's young guests watched her pencil, as it brought before their eyes the beautiful scenery of the neighbourhood, which they had probably before seen her sketch, or in listening to her sweet voice, and gazing upon her angelic countenance. Sometimes they attended her while exploring the more distant scenery on horseback. Thus passed many weeks most agreeably to all; but, alas! most dangerously to some of the party.

Little as Constantia had seen of the world,

she was able to penetrate more quickly, more deeply, into the characters of those with whom she associated, than many who have lived in it half a century; she esteemed and admired her cousin, but the brilliance of Desmond's wit was so tempered by the solidity of her understanding, and still more by a delicacy of sentiment and depth of feeling, which she fully appreciated, that, independently of his elegant person and graceful manner, she thought him one of the first of human beings.

With that intuitive discernment natural to her sex, she perceived herself an object of affection to the two friends; but yet, blind to the nature of her own feelings, she spoke to them in perfect sincerity, so frequently, of her intention to retire to a convent, whenever she could obtain the earl's leave so to do, that she apprehended nothing serious on the part of either.

Accident proved, as is frequently the case, the

friend of love, if opening the eyes of Lady Constantia and Desmond to their mutual affection, could be deemed such. The two young men were attending her ladyship on horseback, when the horse on which she rode took fright, and she would have been precipitated down a fearful declivity, had not the skilful and powerful arm of Desmond checked its career; in doing so, the horse reared, and his fair rider was dismounted. For an instant Lady Constantia knew not where she was; but on opening her eyes, she beheld herself supported in the arms of Desmond, who was gazing upon her in fond alarm: their eyes met; that glance said more than language could have done: a deep blush suffused her pale face, and gently striving to disengage herself from the arms of her supporter, she again raised her eyes, and encountered the stern and haughty gaze of Augustus, who with erect figure and folded arms, stood by them.

Silently he withdrew his cousin from the sup-

port of Desmond; then asking if she felt equal to walking to a cottage a few paces off, he offered his own arm.

"I believe," said she, with a faint smile, "I am only frightened—a few minutes will recover me;" and, taking an arm of each gentleman, she proceeded to the cottage without difficulty, where she remained until a carriage arrived from the castle. Desmond seated himself at her feet with a countenance radiant as the day—the same accident which had first opened his own eyes to the state of his heart, had given him hope that Lady Constantia did not behold him with indifference; but Augustus, contracting his fine forehead, and curling proudly his lip, stood at some distance unnoticed by either.

The following morning the two young men were absent from the breakfast-table, but as they had left a message, saying, they had ridden out early with the intention of spending the day with a friend at some distance, no anxiety was felt on the subject.

Scarcely was the breakfast-hour over, before Father Piacci was called out of the room, to receive the heartrending tidings that Augustus and Desmond had fought, when the former was slightly, the latter severely, wounded: they had both been brought to the castle by a back entrance, and medical aid was already sent for.

It was indeed a painful task to Father Piacci, to break such sad intelligence to the friends of the rash young men; but when Constantia heard it, she clasped her hands, and sinking on her knees, exclaimed, "And I am the cause of all this. Oh! why—why did I ever quit my convent? Forgive me, dearest father—on my knees, I entreat you."

"Forgive you, my child?—what have I to forgive?" replied the worthy old priest, his eyes filling with tears.

Constantia replied not; she only wept, and accused herself of causing the melancholy catastrophe which had occurred.

Whatever duties may be neglected, those of

humanity and charity are generally attended to in a convent. There had Lady Constantia, notwithstanding her high rank, been taught to nurse and attend upon the sick, and now she resolved promptly to put her knowledge in practice, making every exertion for the comfort and advantage of both the sufferers. Silently—noiselessly—did she flit around their beds, placing their pillows in the way most likely to ease their aching heads.

It appeared, that when Desmond first arrived at the castle, his friend positively assured him, that Lady Constantia's charms had made no impression on his heart; since, beautiful as she was, her beauty was of too saint-like a character for his taste. Desmond, placing implicit reliance on the words of Augustus, had therefore given himself up to the full enjoyment of Lady Constantia's society, without apprehension of interfering with the comfort of his friend—not that for an instant the idea of obtaining her affections had suggested itself to

him—that he, the almost portionless ward of Mr. Orville, should strive to obtain the affections of his niece, the future Countess of Orberry, would have been, in the opinion of Desmond, most dishonourable; but, since he had an opportunity of enjoying her delightful society without prejudice to others, he felt himself fully justified in doing so. He thought not of the moth, which in fluttering round the flame rarely escapes uninjured.

On the return of the party to the castle, after the occurrence which had thrown him off his guard—or more correctly, which had first opened his eyes to the state of his own heart, Augustus addressed him haughtily on his apparent admiration of the Lady Constantia, and in a sarcastic manner inquired, "If the cassock was to be exchanged for an ermined robe?"

Hurt at the manner still more than the matter of the inquiry, Desmond replied warmly—Augustus rejoined—and in the course of an angry conversation, acknowledged his attach-

ment to his cousin, with his anxious wish to obtain her regard. Desmond then warmly accused him of having purposely deceived him, with the intention of practising on his credulity; and meeting his friend's anger with more than equal indignation, the result was a duel.

The wound of Augustus being slight, was soon healed; though, for the pleasure of being attended upon by his cousin, he affected still to be an invalid. At length, however, he was obliged to resign that attendance, when Lady Constantia bestowed all her care upon his suffering friend; who, after lingering most painfully during several months, expired with her hand clasped within his!

The noble-minded and ingenuous, but too high-spirited Desmond had sunk gradually; his sufferings had been severe, but without repining he had borne them, accusing himself and the infirmity of his own temper only for what had taken place. His eyes had ever followed Constantia's movements, who, hovering

like a ministering angel around his bed, appeared to bring peace and ease even in moments of the most acute agony. Never had the word love escaped his lips—never had Desmond expressed in words his attachment—yet they fully understood each other; he felt that Constantia returned his affection, and so feeling, prayed earnestly that his life might be spared, were it only for her sake; yet since Providence seemed otherwise to have decreed it, he bowed humbly to that decree, acknowledging the punishment to be just towards one who, in a moment of passion, had violated equally the laws of God and man.

After the death of Desmond, Lady Constantia sank into a state of deep melancholy, from which it appeared impossible to rouse her. When Father Piacci and the earl visited her apartment, they invariably found her countenance hidden from their view by a thick veil, which no entreaties could induce her to remove.

Mr. Orville and Augustus quitted Orford

Castle as soon as possible after the funeral of the unfortunate Desmond, for the purpose of travelling, in hope of dissipating the grief by which they were oppressed—more particularly that of Augustus, who could not forgive himself for having caused the death of his estimable friend, between whom and himself an entire reconciliation had taken place immediately after their unfortunate *rencontre.* Many months elapsed without further change at the castle than that occasioned by the Earl's rapidly declining health, which induced Father Piacci to endeavour to draw Constantia's attention towards it; for a long period she had seemed to join in prayer even mechanically, rather than as if capable of reflecting upon what she said, and to all the earl's most affectionate expressions had replied only in monosyllables.

Father Piacci had hitherto tried gentleness and persuasion alone; he now addressed her sternly, demanding an answer: "Do you, Lady Constantia," said he, "wish to destroy your father?"

Almost screaming with agony, she exclaimed, "No—no—no—let me not cause another death!" And, rushing towards the earl's room, she fell at his feet in strong hysterics.

Lord Orberry took an early opportunity of entreating his daughter to suffer him again to view features so dear to him, when she replied, "Never again must mortal man behold this face—I vowed, when he, who too much admired these now woe-worn features, expired, that none other among mankind should ever again behold them—would that I had never thrown aside this veil!—then—then should I have escaped the misery of having caused his death."

Lord Orberry no longer contested the point, judging it most prudent, under present circumstances, to indulge his daughter's wish.

Finding that she was suffered to ramble about the castle and park in the dress of her novitiate, Lady Constantia flitted about more like a spectre than a living being. This change was of use to her mind, which appeared to be re-

gaining its equilibrium when the earl's death took place.

Again did the young countess sink into a state of extreme melancholy, from which the arrival of Mr. Orville, who was appointed her guardian, could not rouse her. Finding every effort unavailing, and fearing lest this lowness of spirits might end in confirmed insanity, Mr. Orville gladly assented to her proposal that she should go to the continent, accompanied by Father Piacci. As the countess had solemnly promised her father that she would not take the veil, nor enter a convent, except for the purpose of prayer, until she attained her twenty-eighth year, he felt no alarm on that score.

Lady Orberry wishing to travel in utter privacy, laid aside her title, and, accompanied by Father Piacci and her maid, both of whom were devotedly attached to her, set out for the continent. For some months the former wrote gratifying accounts of the improvement of the countess's mental and bodily health—at the

termination of which period, his letters ceased. Mr. Orville's uneasiness was considerably increased by the receipt of a letter from his niece's maid, informing him that Father Piacci's death had taken place after a severe illness, which had affected her lady's health seriously; and immediately afterwards, a second letter announced her death!

With deep regret did her uncle, now Earl of Orberry, receive this intelligence; he set out the day following for Italy, hoping to arrive ere the funeral of his niece took place, since her maid, on whom all orders must devolve, would, he expected, delay it until his arrival, unless in compliance with the previous orders of her lady, she were privately interred.

On reaching the place in which Father Piacci had breathed his last, his grave was readily pointed out, but no information could be gained respecting the females who had attended him in his last moments. One said they had departed in an eastern direction, another that they

had gone south, a third north, a fourth west; but all agreed in saying that no one had died there except the priest.

Puzzled and baffled, the earl proceeded in the direction most likely for the countess to have pursued upon the death of Father Piacci; but, hearing nothing of any person answering her description, he began to suspect that he had been deceived—this suspicion led him to commence his inquiries on a different system from the one he had at first followed—he now asked if an English lady and her attendant had lately been seen there; many weeks elapsed before he met with any clue towards the abode of his niece, but when once obtained, he soon found her, as he suspected, living in retirement. Lady Constantia was dismayed on hearing the voice of her uncle; but, as he spoke to her kindly, reasoning with her on the impropriety of having desired her maid to send an account of her death, rather than finding fault with her, she soon rallied her senses, saying in reply, "What

are titles and wealth to me? I have bade adieu to the world for ever. I laid aside my rank, wishing you to wear that coronet which I had discarded, along with the property belonging to it; I knew I could only obtain my wish by having my death announced to you, and, although I feared you might soon discover the deceit, I likewise knew when you did so, my death must have been universally reported and believed, consequently that you would accede to my wish, rather than expose me to the world."

As the countess ceased to speak, her uncle inwardly said, "If she be mad, there is certainly method in her madness." But fearing to agitate what seemed to him a decidedly unsettled state of mind, by opposition, he gave way to her entreaties for a time, still hoping to prevail upon her to resume her rank and station in society at no distant period.

For some time Mr. Orville, or, as he there called himself, Mr. Glanville, remained with

his niece, but as she persisted in the line of conduct she had adopted to elude discovery, that of utter seclusion during the day, and taking exercise in an evening only, and, as before, in being closely veiled, her uncle found himself placed in such an unpleasant situation, as to induce him to quit her, leaving, in addition to her maid, who had attended upon her from infancy, a highly respectable and confidential servant of his own, on whose fidelity and attention, he could entirely depend.

Before his departure, he made one more effort to prevail upon the countess to return to Orford Castle, and suffer him to state the report of her death to have been an erroneous one.

"Never," said she, in extreme agitation, "never more will I enter a place in which I have known such extreme misery; suffer me, I beseech you, to pass the few years that must, in consequence of my promise, intervene, ere I enter a convent, in perfect obscurity; urge me not again to resume my rank, unless you wish

to deprive me of the small share of understanding which is still left to me."

Dreading lest the excitement under which the unfortunate countess laboured, should really become such as to require confinement, if further opposed, her uncle consented to her wish, and took up his abode at the residence of his ancestors, as the Earl of Orberry; but, whilst he did this, he most scrupulously placed in the funds all the income derived from Lady Orberry's property, that it might be forthcoming, should she hereafter become reconciled to living in society.

Years passed over, and the countess—calm, resigned and melancholy—seeming to derive pleasure alone from the exercises of her religion, and from change of place, for scarcely could it be called change of scene, showed only one symptom of the slightest aberration of intellect, which was her obstinate adherence to the plan of life she had adopted. Her uncle, who fre-

quently saw her, looked upon this as a *monomania*, although it was in conformity with a strict adherence to a vow, made at a time, and under circumstances of peculiar excitement, to one possessed of the acute sensibility and naturally melancholy temperament of the countess.

Lady Orberry having expressed a wish to return to England once more, had been met by her uncle at Calais, who had escorted her to town, well knowing that the metropolis is the place best adapted for concealment. Here Maria entered into that engagement which, while it enabled her so largely to contribute to the comfort of her mother and sisters, interfered so materially with her own happiness. But she had the gratification of perceiving, that her society was of inestimable service to Lady Orberry, who in Maria found a tender friend, a fearless monitor, and a judicious adviser; yet so gently did she touch the scarcely-healed

wound, that Lady Orberry shrank not from it. Maria had scarcely been twelve months the companion and associate of Lady Orberry, before the latter regained that heavenly composure of manner and countenance, which had distinguished her before sorrow had marked her as a victim. Never for an instant did the countess wish to break that vow, which caused her to appear in so singular a light wherever she resided, yet on Maria's account, did she regret being compelled to act so as to make her less happy than she could wish, although the latter, anxious to screen her unfortunate friend from any additional uneasiness, was particularly careful to let no word escape her, indicative of suffering from the secrecy it behoved her to maintain.

As Lady Orberry's mind recovered its tone, her strength of body declined. Her sufferings became at times acute, but they were always borne with such fortitude, as enhanced her cha-

racter in the opinion of Maria, who loved her as if she were a sister.

Mr. Orville felt deeply the unpleasant situation in which he was placed, in having assumed a title to which he had no right, and, although perfectly innocent of intending deception, he felt that, were it known to the world, none would believe that he was not a party to his niece's strange renunciation of rank and wealth. He was therefore perpetually haunted by apprehensions of a discovery, which he could not have outlived. This fear it was, which caused him to bind Maria to secrecy so solemnly.

When Lady Orberry's illness increased to such a degree, as to cause Maria to apprehend her speedy death, Mr. Orville joined them in Italy, with a determination to remain there while she lived.

On the demise of the countess, a memorandum was found, containing directions for her

funeral, and for the erection of a monument already described. The same memorandum requested Maria's acceptance of all such jewels as were not heir-looms, at the same time beseeching her uncle, to make the worldly prosperity of her friend his future care. Lady Orberry's wishes were most scrupulously executed, while the earl added to the monument she had ordered to be erected, that brief memorial, which was afterwards seen by Mr. Danvers.

Through the interest of a friend, Mr. Ormsbey has been presented with church preferment, of sufficient value to enable them to live in comfort, and to bring up his family respectably; and as all mystery is now at an end, his wife has at length acknowledged herself to be satisfied respecting the conduct of her inestimable sister.

If I have not failed in my attempt to depict the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Danvers, it is almost needless to state that he is a most exemplary member of that sacred profession to

which he has devoted talents of no common order. An excellent husband and father—he instructs his flock in their duty to God and man, not only by precept but by example; whilst his wife is a pattern of all that is most admirable in woman.

THE MOATED HOUSE.

THE MOATED HOUSE.

The cottage with broken windows, separated from a blacksmith's shop, now falling into ruins, by what appears to have been once a pretty garden (since roses and various other flowers may be seen still to bloom amongst the weeds with which the place is overrun), was formerly occupied by an honest and industrious couple, who, after bringing up a large family respectably, left it, at their death, to their youngest son, Robert, he alone having remained with them, whilst their elder children made their way in the world in the various trades and professions to which their inclinations led them.

Robert Tanner was a good-tempered, hand-

some young man—as industrious in his habits as dutiful and affectionate to his parents. When his father died, though some individuals hoped, from the youth of his successor, to obtain the principal business of the parish, but few of the inhabitants were inclined to doubt that their horses would be as well shod by the young man, as they had been by his father, and still fewer to employ any other blacksmith, whilst a Tanner remained in the village.

Robert commenced the world with every prospect of happiness. He married a pretty, innocent girl, who brought him a fortune of a hundred pounds; and each revolving year seemed but to increase their felicity by adding to their family, since Robert only worked the harder to provide for them. Always neat and respectable in appearance, although they already numbered eleven children, they seemed to have all that was necessary for comfort in their humble station; and when on a Sunday the comely parents went to church, accompanied by their

little family, clad in their holiday garments, it was an interesting sight to behold them.

About this time, beer-houses were first established. A person who believed himself to be a friend of Robert's, proposed that he should open one, and let his wife, or one of his boys, serve out beer, whilst he attended to the forge; assuring him that he would find this infinitely the most profitable trade of the two. Robert had a dark spot in his character—he was fond of money; his charges, we had observed, were generally higher than those of his father had been; but when taxed with this, he urged the difference of the times in which he lived; yet with so much good-nature and civility, at the same time that he did his work so well, that those who employed him did not long contend the matter. The hope held out by his friend of considerable profit was too great a temptation for Robert to resist; and although Jane strongly objected to the measure which her husband told her he had in contemplation, yet as he pointed

out to her the advantage their family would derive from it, and the certainty of being able to provide for them much better than they otherwise could do, she at length, though with some hesitation, consented.

The rector, myself, and most of the respectable inhabitants of the parish, though we regretted that they purposed undertaking, what we feared must not only lead to trouble and disappointment to themselves, but likewise to many of the parishioners, did not so strongly oppose it as we otherwise should have done, under an apprehension that if they gave up the idea, it would be acted upon by some person who would be likely to carry on the business in a still more objectionable manner.

For a short time, the principal inconvenience felt was by those who sent their horses to be shod; upon which occasions the servants were frequently induced to spend that time at Tanner's house, which ought to have been devoted to their master's business.

But ere long the overseers received complaints from many of the wives of those men receiving parish pay, stating that their husbands no longer brought their money home for the support of their families, but remained at the beer-house until half, or sometimes until the whole, was expended, their wives and children being consequently in want of food!

It was then thought necessary to represent to Tanner the disadvantage which his new trade was to the community, assuring him that he would lose all his custom as a blacksmith if he did not give it up. The heretofore civil and respectful tradesman was no longer so: he answered those who spoke to him on the subject rudely, saying, that in retailing beer he violated no law; and as his principal aim was to improve the condition of his family, if his neighbours disapproved of it they might do their worst. Surprised by this language, the rector, to whom he spoke, said he was sorry to hear one whom

he had until then considered a respectable and well-behaved man, thus conduct himself.

This rebuke caused Robert only to make use of still more insolent language than before, for which the circumstance of his being inebriated was by no means an excuse. The consequence of Robert's misconduct was, as might be expected, that all the neighbouring gentlemen, and several of the principal agriculturists, no longer employed him as a blacksmith, though some of the latter still continued to do so, for the sake of his wife and family, as likewise from their acquaintance with him from his childhood.

Prior to this period, Robert had been seen more frequently in the tap-room than working at the forge, to which he left his man to attend; but from this time he had so little business at the latter, that it became necessary to part with his assistant; consequently, those who still wished to employ him, could rarely meet with any one to attend to their orders; and were, however re-

luctantly, obliged to apply to some one else to execute them. Robert, equally angry with his neighbours and himself, flew from the beer-barrel to spirits for consolation, under the mortification he had thus brought upon himself. The forge was soon entirely resigned, and in opposition to the earnest entreaties of his wife, the beer-house was turned into a public-house, the small painted bell that had before adorned it being exchanged for one of much larger dimensions, which was placed upon a post in front of the house.

Jane, who was clever and notable, contrived by her good management to keep every thing in tolerable order for some time. She deeply lamented the change which had taken place in her husband, and the evil hour in which he had listened to the suggestions of one so little calculated to advise, as his friend had proved himself to be; but whilst she grieved to see him constantly seated in the tap-room, and taking little part in the business beyond drinking with

the customers, she thought it behoved her to exert herself still more, that her children might be saved from utter ruin.

Such was the state of affairs with Robert and his wife, when late one night two travellers arrived at their house. Jane had locked the doors long before their arrival, for it was past twelve o'clock; but the travellers knocked loudly for admittance, and as the night was severe, and the ground covered with snow, they did not knock in vain. After placing some corn before their horses, which they said they always attended to themselves, they threw off their large riding-coats, removed the handkerchiefs which enveloped their faces, and drawing towards the fire, the dying embers of which had been roused to a cheerful blaze, they showed two of the most unprepossessing countenances Jane had ever gazed upon. One of the men was tall and muscular, with large features, eyes restless and eager, a mouth distended almost from ear to ear, and a general expression of

fierceness, nearly amounting to ferocity. His companion was a much slighter built man, with features which were formed in too insignificant a mould to have conveyed any idea of the passions which might lurk within, had not the small, round, dark eyes, over which were placed two narrow black eyebrows, that were contracted into a malignant scowl, glanced furtively around, with a look half fearful and half threatening, which made Jane's heart beat with apprehension, though she scarcely knew of what; but having placed some supper before the strangers, she gladly availed herself of her husband's desire that she should retire to rest, whilst he would remain and attend to the guests; when, fatigued by a long and laborious day, she soon lost all her fears in a sound sleep.

At an early hour the next morning, the eldest boy, whose business it was to attend the cows and pigs, was at his post, and perceived, from the marks of the horses' feet in the snow, that

four travellers had already quitted the stable. At this he was somewhat surprised, as he recollected that when he retired to rest there was no one in the house, except their own family; and as there had not been any fall of snow during the night, had company arrived on horseback, there must, he thought, have been tracks of the horses coming as well as going; whereas, these were all of the latter description, and in two opposite directions. As the boy pondered over what appeared to him so unaccountable, he called his mother's attention to the circumstance; and she, equally surprised with himself, asked for an explanation from her husband, saying, "How comes it that there are no marks of the horses coming here last night, whilst there are the traces of four going away; I heard of no other travellers being here than the two I left with you?"

To this Robert replied in a more surly tone than usual, "Hold your tongue, if you can, and don't meddle with what you can't understand."

As he spoke, he took a broom and hastily swept away all traces of horses having been in the yard. The evil propensity to which Robert had been but too much addicted prior to this time, now increased to such a degree, that he was rarely, if ever, perfectly sober; whilst an occasional wildness of demeanour, and look of apprehension, was visible on the arrival of any strangers at the Bell. Yet Jane thought he had less cause for fear than during some preceding weeks, as bailiffs, with which he had been threatened, were no longer to be dreaded, since he had paid some large bills to the maltster and others, which he had a short time before declared himself utterly unable to discharge.

About ten days after the circumstance alluded to having taken place, a rumour reached Southend of a horrid murder having been perpetrated on the person of an elderly gentleman of the name of Ilderton, and an old woman, his housekeeper. A party of men were se·ted by the

kitchen fire at the Bell, when one of the number said, "Have you heard that old Ilderton and his housekeeper have been murdered?"

Murdered!" repeated Robert, turning alarmingly pale; "who says he's murdered?"

"Why I do, for one, because I have seen the bodies, and a more frightfuller sight I never set eyes upon."

"You lie!" replied Robert, who was very much intoxicated; "they did not murder him—they only robbed the old miser."

"If the villains had only robbed him," returned the first speaker, "I should not think any great harm was done, for what was the use of hoarding up his gold in the way he did? but they have both robbed and murdered the old man, and a more ghastlier corpse I never set eyes upon: the inquest is to be held to-morrow."

Robert had during this speech fixed his eyes, which seemed almost starting out of his head, upon the speaker; his mouth was distended, and he appeared as if gasping for breath.

"Why, Master Tanner, what is the matter, man? You could not have looked more frightened, if I had said you had murdered the old fellow yourself."

Here the landlord made an effort to reply, but the words died away in an unnatural gurgling sound, and in an instant he was deluged with blood!

He had burst a blood-vessel, and as the medical man, whose aid was immediately called in, said the house must be kept perfectly quiet, all those who had been there assembled, quitted the place, with the exception of the person who had introduced the subject of Mr. Ilderton's death, and who was a stranger at Southend, having only arrived there that evening. What effect the conversation with its disastrous termination had upon him did not immediately appear; but the rest of the party forgot, in their regret at Robert's sudden seizure, all that had occurred prior to its taking place; or if they recollected any peculiarity of manner, they attributed it to intoxication or illness.

Jane had not been an uninterested spectator of any part of the foregoing scene; she beheld her husband's emotion with amazement; she saw that he had ruptured a blood-vessel with more than the mere apprehension of an affectionate wife, for she feared that one was only the consequence of the other, though how her husband could have been in any way implicated in this dreadful business she knew not.

The day after the alarm occasioned by Robert's sudden illness, his eldest boy said,

"Mother, do you know that Mr. Ilderton and his housekeeper were murdered the night that the tracks of the four horses were to be seen going from our stable and that none were to be seen coming to it; for, when the carrier went that very morning to know if any thing was wanted, as he always did once a week, he found the house shut up, and the door locked, and so he thought the old gentleman and his servant were asleep; and then he looked about him and he saw in the snow the tracks of two horses going from the house towards the Lon-

don road, and as he came with his cart to Southend, he saw that two horses had gone from this village to the moated house; and so, mother, do you know, I think that those two ill-looking men, who you told me were here that night, must have done this wicked deed, and that they must have had some kind of witchcraft to alter the tracks of the horses; and besides, mother, don't you remember how angry father was when you asked him about it, and he got the besom and swept the marks away? I suppose he suspected all was not right; but he was afraid the men would do him a mischief, and——but—what's the matter, mother— what's happened?"

Whilst her son thus spoke, Jane had in vain endeavoured to check him, without altogether telling him to be silent, which she feared might draw the stranger's attention upon him still more strongly than it before appeared; but young Robert, unconscious of any thing to conceal, allowed his tongue to run on without

observing his mother's agitation until he had nearly concluded, and then he at the same moment saw the eye of the stranger, who was standing by at the time, fixed upon him with a scrutinizing look. He, however, made no remark, but shortly afterwards proposed that the boy should point out to him a road he wished to go. Jane instantly said she would show it to him; but the stranger declining her aid, said he wanted her son to go an errand for him afterwards: and the mother, perceiving that by further opposition she should only draw suspicion upon the family, suffered them to depart. She did not for an instant suppose her husband to have been privy to the murder; but when she thought of the various suspicious circumstances that had occurred, she could not but feel apprehensive that he would have some trouble in consequence of those horrible-looking men having made that house their resting-place during the night, and she felt somewhat alarmed, lest the stranger, who had taken up his present abode

with them without apparent cause, should be induced to suspect her husband had been in any way concerned in this dreadful business, and give information accordingly.

The old place known by the name of the Moated House, is situated about eight miles from Southend. Nothing can be more desolate than its appearance. It is a square stone building, the walls of which are nearly covered with a kind of short dark moss where the ivy has left any part visible. The windows are large, but on a near approach—when one perceives the immense thickness of wall in which they are placed, the quantity of heavy stonework in the divisions, and the smallness of the leaded panes of glass—one feels inclined to wonder how the former inhabitants could have had light sufficient to enable them to execute those endless pieces of female industry and ingenuity, for which our ancestors were so celebrated; some of which, in the form of huge moth-eaten chairs covered with worsted work, and hangings in

imitation of the Gobelin tapestry, still decorate the rooms. Immediately around the mansion is, as the name implies, a moat, which, no doubt, was originally placed there not only to protect it from intruders, but to drain the garden which would otherwise have been almost a bog. The moat is now, and has ever been since I can recollect it, half full of thick dirty water, covered with a green scum, through which here and there peeps the water-lily, mingled with other and less beautiful aquatic plants—the garden, placed on one side the house, is surrounded by a high stone wall, against which may be found the remains of trees that, half a century ago, may have borne fruit, but which now scarcely put forth a leaf; and amid the rubbish and weeds with which it is filled may yet be seen a few gooseberry and currant bushes, overgrown with bindweed, or covered with moss, and decayed apple-trees, on which the birds still find a foundation for their little nests, secure from the intrusion of mischievous boys. A yew hedge

adorns the opposite side of the mansion, and in front stand several yews, which, from their still unnatural forms, lead one to suppose they have once been trimmed to represent such monstrous shapes, as nature never in her wildest moments could have conceived. With the above exceptions, not a tree is to be seen within half a mile of the house; on one side of which extends a piece of bleak, barren, swampy ground, for nearly a mile; on the other several enclosures, which, at a great expense, were once brought into tolerable cultivation, but when left to nature resumed that steril appearance more congenial to the situation and soil. Some fir-trees had been planted near the house, but of them not one now remains. Tradition speaks of oaks having once grown in the hedge-rows; but if so, they all had disappeared ere I knew the place, which was ever in my opinion, a residence unfit for the occupation of any being of social or cheerful habits.

The story told of its erection in this bleak and desolate situation is, that an ancestor of Mr. Ilderton's having been deserted by a wife, to whom he was much attached, in the agony of mind occasioned by her desertion, forswore the society of all mankind, and retired to the moated house, as soon as it was possible to erect it, taking with him two lovely daughters, neither of whom were ever suffered to walk beyond the garden; and each night, ere he retired to rest, he himself saw the bridge drawn up, which, when let down during the day, admitted of communication with the surrounding country. Here these unfortunate young women were detained during many years, with no amusement beyond that of laborious pieces of embroidery, or worsted work; until one of them, sinking into a state of melancholy, threw herself into the moat, then not only filled with water, but much deeper and broader than at present, where she was a few hours afterwards discovered drowned! The father, misan-

thrope though he was, no longer wished to keep his only remaining child in seclusion, but removed her immediately to his house in town, where she shortly afterwards married a person, who took the name of Ilderton, on becoming possessed of the large estates of that gentleman.

The moated house, with the steril ground around it was, from that time, occupied by the descendants of an old servant of the original constructor, since no one wished to rent a place, unprepossessing in external appearance and internal accommodation, with land of so bad a quality, as to give little hope of repaying the expense of cultivation, and above all, haunted, as it was universally reported to be, by the unquiet spirit of the unfortunate young lady, who had there drowned herself. Thus, generation after generation, of the family of the old housekeeper, continued to live there rent free. Born in the place, they felt no fear of the reputed ghost, and looked with respect

and admiration, almost amounting to veneration, upon the needlework of "the sisters," which they displayed with pride to the few persons whom curiosity drew towards the house. Such were its occupants in my childhood; but about thirty years prior to the commission of the murder stated to have taken place, the last descendant of the Ilderton's came to this melancholy abode. We knew him only by character; but, even in our sequestered corner of the world, we had heard that Mr. Ilderton was one of the gayest and most fashionable men about town; consequently we were not surprised to learn that the fine property, which had descended to him, through a long line of ancestry, was consigned to the hammer; but, being principally situated in a distant part of the country, we had taken little interest in its disposal, nor inquired further respecting its owner, until his arrival at this hitherto deserted place caused some sensation in the neighbourhood. Then the usual inquiries respecting who

had called, and who meant to call, took place. My father said, though a person like Mr. Ilderton was not likely to remain long at such a home, yet as it was in his own parish, he thought it right to pay him the attention of a visit. He accordingly called, but was told by her who had long been mistress of the mansion, that her master was not at home. My father left with his card for Mr. Ilderton, an invitation to dinner; to which he soon received an answer, informing him that the writer had for ever quitted the society and haunts of man!

The cause of such extraordinary conduct was soon known: Mr. Ilderton had been followed, courted, and flattered, while possessed of wealth; but no sooner was that dissipated amongst a set of sharpers and sycophants, than they left him, to follow some one more likely to contribute to their pleasure. This he bore with a smile of bitterness; but when a female, to whom he was attached, and on whom he had squandered a large part of his property, quitted

his protection, for that of his most intimate friend, he smiled no longer; but he made a vow to renounce all society during the rest of his life, that he might not again suffer from the ingratitude and selfishness of mankind. He forgot that he had chosen his companions and friends from the most worthless part of it: had he done otherwise, he would not, in the hour of need, have been so utterly forsaken. His estates, his plate, his stud of horses, his mistress, his thousand *friends*—for such they had called themselves—were all gone; all that was left to him, was the moated house, and two faithful dependants, who inhabited it, for their children, several of whom they had brought up, were in various and distant services.

The answer sent by Mr. Ilderton to my father, prevented any of the other gentlemen in the neighbourhood calling, and soon it seemed to be forgotten that the old mansion had other inmates than during many preceding years.

Mr. Ilderton was never seen beyond his own bleak little domain, and there few persons thought of appearing. Twenty years after his arrival there, Francis Dodd, the former master of the place, died; on which occasion my father saw Mr. Ilderton for the first time. He had then lost all appearance of the man of fashion; his dress was that of a farmer, and his manners rough almost to rudeness. As Francis was his only male servant, when he died it became necessary to part with his cows and other stock, for he would not suffer a stranger to enter within his gates, and Mrs. Dodd was unable to undertake the necessary attendance upon them. One cow Mr. Ilderton still determined to keep, and that he and his housekeeper tended between them; had they not done so, it is more than probable, they would frequently have been without food, for only once a week was any person allowed to visit the house; on which occasions a carrier from Southend took all they were likely to require

until he again visited them. Of late years, it was reported that the only pleasure Mr. Ilderton enjoyed was that of counting his sovereigns, of which it was said he had a great number by him; the name of the "old miser" was therefore that by which he was generally designated, if named at all.

On the return of young Robert from escorting the stranger, he told his mother that he had been much interrogated respecting what he had heard of the two men whom he had mentioned having come to the house late one night, and having departed at daybreak; likewise respecting the state of his father's affairs; adding, that he had little information to give on either subject, the stranger having before heard nearly all that he knew on the first, and his own sense having told him he had no right to question him on the second.

The landlord was able in the course of a few days to leave his bed, and soon afterwards to quit his room; but the surgeon, Mr. Wilson,

having represented to him that his life depended upon his abstaining from drink, he wandered about the house like the ghost of his former self, though as he had been much intoxicated on the day the rupture of the blood-vessel took place, he appeared totally to have forgotten any thing which occurred at that time, or immediately preceding it; consequently he made no allusion to the conversation which had taken place, nor to Mr. Ilderton's death.

The stranger, who was named Brown, still remained at the Bell, though without ostensible business, generally being from home the greatest part of the day, and in the evening joining any of the persons who might there assemble. The day after Robert had again made his appearance amongst his guests, Brown asked him to change a ten-pound note for him—he immediately opened a closet, and took from a box some sovereigns, which he gave in exchange for the note.

Brown no sooner received them than he

looked intently at each sovereign, when putting them into a canvass bag, he said, "You can probably recollect, Mr. Tanner, where you received this money?"

"Where I received that money?" replied Robert, with considerable agitation; "yes—to be sure I do. Let me think a little:—it was of that elderly lady that staid here so long."

Jane, on hearing this reply, felt her heart sicken; for she knew that no such person had been there, and was equally afraid to guess what his design might be for such a fabrication, as by what means he meant to support it when further interrogated.

"Humph!" continued Brown, "you can't perhaps exactly recollect which way the elderly lady went when she left you?"

"I know nothing about that," answered Robert, in a surly tone; "it is no business of a landlord's where his guests come from, or where they go."

"Very true; but you can perhaps tell her name?"

"It was Donald, or Donnor, or something like it."

And here Robert left the kitchen, when Mr. Brown said to Jane, "This lady must have been a good customer!"

But Jane neither wishing to contradict the statement of her husband, nor to support him in a falsehood, pretended not to hear the last remark, and quitted the room.

The following day Mr. Brown entered the Bell, with a printed paper in his hand, saying, "I think this will surely lead to the detection of old Ilderton's murderers — five hundred pounds reward to any one who will bring the criminals to justice."

Robert turned deadly pale. "Murderers?" he murmured, "did you say murderers?"

"Yes, you know we were talking of the murder of Ilderton and his housekeeper, when you burst that blood-vessel, and—but how's

this, man, you are not going to burst another, sure?"

Robert had sunk back on his chair, covering his face with his hands, and uttering a deep groan. Jane, who was at work near them, went up to her husband, and in a tremulous voice, asked if he was ill; he again groaned, but made no other reply. She drew his hand from his face, which she beheld almost convulsed with agitation, and then screamed aloud for assistance; when, in an instant, Robert made a strong and not unsuccessful effort to recover his self-possession, saying, "I am better—a sudden pain in my head—I shall soon be well."

"I am glad to hear that," said Brown, "for I wanted to have some talk with you about this murder, the perpetrators of which I am endeavouring to discover, and I think with your help we may manage it."

"My help!" replied the still agitated man; "how can I assist you?—I did not know that Mr. Ilderton was dead."

"He is dead, and the verdict of the jury was, 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown;' a reward of five hundred pounds is offered, on conviction of the offenders, to any one who will give evidence against them—that is, if not actually concerned in the murder. There is strong reason to believe you know more of the matter than any body else, except the murderers. If you were not with them when it was committed, I recommend you to turn king's evidence, save yourself, and gain the reward."

"Me!—I know nothing. What can I know?—"

"You can and do know, and must either turn evidence, or suffer with the other culprits—who, I can tell you, have been this day seized—for you must now go with me."

Here Brown, who, it appeared, was a Bow-street officer, showed a warrant for his arrest, and the landlord with a shudder unresistingly resigned himself to his fate; whilst Jane, with

streaming eyes, and wringing her hands in the bitterness of her distress, exclaimed, "Take him not to prison!—good Mr. Brown, he is innocent—indeed he is innocent; he was at home all the night that dreadful murder was committed—I know he was at home."

Robert, who had appeared so overwhelmed as scarcely to have power to deny what he was charged with; his eyes almost starting from his head, and his face totally devoid of colour, now only uttered a deep groan; whilst Brown said, "I hope he is innocent, for your sake, mistress; but there are such strong circumstances against him, that he must now accompany me before the magistrates, and if they think proper, they will release him."

"Oh! they will—they must release him," sobbed Jane; "he never injured any one but himself."

"Well," said Brown, with some appearance of feeling, "I am sorry for it, mistress, but we

must go—I must do my duty, and I hope the magistrates may think him innocent."

So saying, Jane was left with her children to hope that those who had known him from his birth, would not be induced by a stranger to believe such a dreadful tale against her husband. Yet whilst her heart led her thus to hope, she could not but feel that many suspicious circumstances had occurred, which required explanation. Jane had soon the distress of learning that her husband was ordered to be removed to the county gaol, where she might occasionally be allowed to see him. She lost no time in following him there, that she might urge him to make every necessary explanation to the counsel who might be employed for his defence; but he appeared so totally lost to every thing passing around him, that it was quite impossible to gain any information from him. He seemed in a kind of stupor, incapable of thinking, and almost of speaking—he uttered not a word beyond a monosyllable, and

then not always to the purpose, so that the eminent counsellor to whom Jane applied found he must form the defence upon information derived from her; and if that did not succeed, on the state of his mind.

"You know that your husband was not out during the night in question, do you not, Mrs. Tanner?" said the barrister, whom she had with some difficulty prevailed upon to undertake her husband's defence.

"Alas!" she replied, "I believe he did not quit the house, but I cannot be certain of it, as he was not in bed all night."

She then gave him a particular account of the arrival of the two men, and of their appearance—the remark of her son respecting the tracks of their horses' feet, and her husband's conduct in consequence—with every other apparently suspicious circumstance that had come to her knowledge.

When she had concluded her recital, Mr. Talbot inquired if her husband had been in any

pecuniary difficulties. She replied, that she believed he had been urged to pay some large bills at a time when the means were not forthcoming.

"Did he continue in the same apparent want of money?"

Jane hesitated to answer.

"You must be open and explicit with me; as without I am fully informed by you of all that may tell against him, I cannot possibly undertake the defence of your husband. You may be assured that nothing which you say to his disadvantage will transpire; although it is necessary I should be thoroughly informed of every circumstance, however trivial, relative to his conduct latterly."

Thus urged, Mrs. Tanner informed Mr. Talbot of the recent payment by her husband of several large bills, though she was not at all aware of whence he became possessed of the means.

On hearing this, Mr. Talbot looked unusually grave; but seeing the distress in which poor

Jane was involved, he begged her to hope for the best, as he trusted he should yet be able to gain such information from her husband as would make his innocence appear at once.

The assizes were near at hand, and the expected trial of the three prisoners for the murder of Mr. Ilderton and his housekeeper, caused an unusual sensation in a county where such crimes had been almost unknown. When brought to the bar, Tanner appeared in the same sullen or apathetic state in which he had remained from the time of being first accused of participation in the murder. The circumstantial evidence against the two men with whom he was implicated was too strong to admit of doubt. One of these persons, the worst-looking of the two, had, it appeared, robbed the moated house, during one of the rare temporary absences of his master ten years before, on which occasion he was sentenced to transportation for life. No sooner was the sentence pronounced, than, even in the presence of the judge, with a

diabolical expression of countenance, he exclaimed, "Old Ilderton shall rue this day, for I will yet return to England, and make him pay dearly for what he has made me suffer."

This man had made his escape from Botany Bay about six months preceding the murder, when he had joined a gang of noted housebreakers in the metropolis—but he had not forgotten his threatened vengeance. To murder the old gentleman who had prosecuted him was one of the most ardent wishes of his sanguinary mind; he persuaded one whom he had made the companion of his escape, to join him in the execution of the deed. They were proved to have been making inquiries respecting the number of Mr. Ilderton's household—to have called at a little blacksmith's shop within ten miles of his residence, and there to have had the shoes taken off their horses' feet, and put on the reverse way, paying him highly for his trouble, but swearing him to secrecy. They were tracked across the fields in the snow—they were observed by a

countryman not far from the house, on the evening of the day on which Mr. Ilderton had last been seen in his fields, and on which the shutters of the kitchen windows had last been opened—they were tracked again across the fields to the road leading to Southend— they were proved to have arrived late at night at the Bell, and were supposed to have left it early the next morning; though what occurred there no one knew but themselves and Robert, who could not be prevailed upon to utter a word either in crimination of them or in exculpation of himself.

But there was proof even stronger than all this—they were detected offering a bank post-bill for exchange, which was proved to have belonged to the unfortunate Mr. Ilderton, and to have sold a watch and seals which were likewise known to have been his.

They made no defence—not a human being spoke to their character—they denied not the facts, yet confessed not the crime. When the

numerous suspicious circumstances, which have before been stated respecting Robert, were collected together, and strongly urged by the counsel for the crown—when the only witnesses in his favour were those who, while they stated his previous excellent conduct, admitted that from the period of his opening a beer-house, he had ceased to be industrious, and had become strongly addicted to drink—when it appeared that Mr. Ilderton had long been in the habit of putting upon his sovereigns that small and peculiar mark which was discovered upon those given by Tanner in exchange to Mr. Brown, whilst it was evident no such person had ever been at the Bell as he had stated himself to have received the money from—when it likewise appeared that Robert had declared himself totally unable to pay some large bills the day prior to the murder and robbery, whilst, within four-and-twenty hours afterwards, they were discharged with money proved to have belonged to Mr. Ilderton, and of which neither he

nor his wife could give any account—when it was recollected that two of the prisoners had been proved to have had the shoes of their horses reversed for the purpose of concealment, and that Tanner had hastily swept away all traces of their having been in his yard, upon his son making some remark on the peculiarity of four horses having *gone* from the stable whilst none appeared to have come—when to all these circumstances was added the extreme agitation of Tanner on hearing the murder named—there could, it was imagined, be but one verdict given—and that must be against the prisoner.

Mr. Talbot, in a very ingenious and eloquent reply, dwelt upon Tanner's previously good character—upon the improbability of a man plunging at once into a crime of such magnitude—on the frequency of circumstantial evidence proving incorrect—on appearances leading to very erroneous conclusions—on the state of his mind—concluding the whole with an earnest appeal to the feelings of the jury in favour of his wife and

children, and beseeching them not, by pronouncing a severe sentence upon the prisoner, to suffer him to lose the advantage of that doubt which must remain on the minds of those most inclined to think him guilty, and to reflect how much better it was that even a criminal should escape, than an innocent man be executed.

In summing up, the judge concluded as usual with begging that the jury, if they had any doubts, would suffer the prisoner to have the advantage of them.

The jury retired from the box, and in ten minutes returned, giving their verdict that John Harpin and James Giles were guilty of the robbery and murder, and that Robert Tanner was an accessory after the fact. At that instant, a loud and fearful shriek burst from the midst of the spectators—it was Jane Tanner! At that sound, Robert, who until then had listened in apparent apathy, gave a convulsive start; his before pale and almost inanimate features suddenly became violently agitated—he made an effort to speak,

and then sunk senseless into the arms of one of the gaol attendants.

Within a week from the sentence being pronounced, the three criminals were ordered to be executed! On that day the largest concourse of people ever assembled on such an occasion, in the west of England, met for the purpose of beholding these wretched men suffer the penalty of their crimes. Such a disgrace had never before fallen upon Southend; and all its inhabitants deeply lamented that one, whose youth, and the principal part of his manhood, had passed not merely blamelessly, but in a praiseworthy manner, should have been led into the commission of the crime for which he was to suffer.

But what crime is there which a drunkard may not commit!

Jane had spent some hours with her unfortunate husband the day prior to his execution; but although her feelings were wrought up almost to a state of distraction, she could gain

from him nothing to lessen her grief. He merely told her he deserved to suffer, though he knew not of Mr. Ilderton's having been murdered, until he, along with herself, heard the circumstance related in his own house.

Tanner was first launched into eternity—his trembling limbs were with difficulty supported to the drop—his features were wan and attenuated to an almost spectral degree; and as, with one hand placed upon his heart, and the other feebly extended towards the crowd who were gazing upon him, many of whom were his old companions and neighbours, he made an effort to speak, the awe-struck multitude drew closer to the spot on which he stood. But the effort was vain—the half-opened mouth was again closed with a deep groan, and he staggered against the clergyman who kindly supported him. In a few moments the wretched man raised himself from his recumbent posture, and cast his eyes towards heaven, whilst with clasped hands he seemed uttering an internal prayer.

His convulsed features became calm—the cord was placed around his neck—he gave the appointed signal, and in two minutes all was over!

The next criminal was totally different in appearance and manner—his person strong and muscular, seemed to have suffered little from the awful situation in which he stood—all his features were large and coarse, with an expression extremely revolting—his scowling forehead, and full glaring eyes, looked capable of any crime—he advanced with a firm step towards the drop—looked upon the crowd below with an air of defiance—repulsed the chaplain, who attempted to say something to him on the subject of repentance, late as it was—then coolly adjusted the noose around his neck, and glanced his eye towards the body of his companion in suffering, as it dangled in the air, and as he did so, a loud sardonic laugh, escaped him. A thrill of horror ran through the crowd. "Ha! ha!" said he, "I laugh to think that the landlord came in for

his share." And giving the appointed signal, he was silenced for ever.

The third sufferer seemed to feel the awful situation in which he was placed; and, after spending some minutes in prayer, turned towards the assembled multitude, saying, "Let our fate be a warning to you, to avoid bad company, and the alehouse; two of us deserve every thing that can befal us, but that poor man," pointing to Tanner, "was not so guilty as we were; *he* was innocent in comparison, for we shed that blood, of which he never even heard, he only partook of the spoils; the demon of avarice seized him, and he could not resist it. Had he been content with the honest sober calling of a blacksmith, he would not now have been here; and had I not as a boy been an habitual liar, I should not as a man have disgraced my family, and killed my mother, by my iniquitous practices—for then I should never have been the tool and companion of that wretched man, who led me into the com-

mission of every crime." He then again spent some minutes in prayer, and the awful scene was quickly terminated!

Although Jane had been unable to prevail upon her husband to make any confession to her, respecting the crime in which he had participated, he made an ample one to the chaplain of the prison, and, at his death, a long letter was delivered to her from Robert, in which he expressed his repentance, and requested forgiveness from herself, for all he had caused her to suffer. He then informed her, that when left with the two strangers, on the night they had stopped at the Bell, they asked him if he could do a little job in the blacksmith line to their horses; to which he replied, that he dared to say he could do it, but the doubt was whether he should feel inclined. To this the men answered, that, as they purposed paying handsomely for what they wanted done, they supposed he would not object; so then they

told him one of them had a little love affair, which it was necessary to keep secret, and to prevent their being tracked in the snow, on their visit to the house, they had had their horses' shoes removed, and placed backward on their feet; but, as their purpose was answered, they now wished the shoes to be placed properly, as the animals did not go so well in that state.

"I agreed to their proposal," continued Tanner, "and after placing the shoes in the usual way, they gave me a five-pound note, and made me swear not to tell any thing about it, lest the damsel's father should discover where they had been. I was then going to sit down, and take a tankard with them, but they told me I had already had plenty of drink, and they had some private business together, therefore I must follow my wife to her apartment; I was going to reason with them, on the hardship of being turned out of my own kitchen, but one of them gave me

a look, which made my blood curdle; so, taking up my candle, I went to my room, followed by one of my guests, the tallest of them, who locked me in, saying, 'Before we set out in the morning, your door shall be opened; don't be alarmed, for we won't touch any thing in the house—"honour among thieves," you know.' And grinning horribly, he closed the door. I should not have been so obedient, had I not seen pistols peeping out of the pocket of the man.

"When I was first locked in, I thought of telling you all that had taken place; if I had done so, I should have been saved from this terrible fate; but the recollection of my oath, and the impossibility of telling you all that led me to suspect these men were robbers (for, when able to think, I felt sure that neither of them looked much like being on a love affair), made me not waken you. But my curiosity respecting them, determined me to get out at the trap-door at the top of our

room; so I did this, first putting the two loaded pistols, I had bought when I was a special constable, into my pocket. Having put off my shoes, I crept softly to the room over the kitchen, where I knew there were holes in the floor that I could see through: and sure enough I did see what surprised me; for on the table before them, was a quantity of gold, piled up in heaps; and one of the men held a pocket-book in his hands, and was counting out bank-notes.

" 'Come,' said the tall one, 'we are pretty well paid for our long journey, and the trouble of executing our errand; and,' with a horrid laugh, 'old Ilderton will never miss the money bags.'

" 'No,' replied the other, in a surly tone, 'for they say he would neither use it himself, nor let any one else use it; the money won't be long hoarded up now.' And they went on counting.

" I had heard enough to convince me that

they had robbed the old miser, and the devil put it into my head to have part of their wealth; for, thought I, the robbery is already committed, and if I can get some of the money, I may keep out of gaol, as I shall be able to pay the maltster, and some others, that threaten to send me there; so, going softly down stairs, I suddenly entered the kitchen, with a pistol in each hand, which I pointed towards the robbers. On seeing me, they started up in confusion, the tall man drawing out of his pocket a huge pistol, whilst the little one strove to sweep all the money into his hat; but in such a hurry, that several sovereigns fell upon the floor.

"'Hold!' said I, 'do not be frightened, I have no intention of hurting you.'

"'Frightened!' said the tall man, 'frightened of a drunken fellow like thou!' And he let his hand drop with the pistol, as I did the same.

"'Why,' said I, 'you see I am n t so

drunk, but I could get out of my room, though you did lock me in, which, if I had had my pistols in my pocket, you should not have done.'

"'Well,' said the man, with a grin, "then my sober landlord, what do you want with us, after being told we do not want your company?'

"'Why I suspected you had not exactly told me a true story, and I was resolved to find out the truth. I now know that you have robbed old Ilderton,'—the men looked at each other—'and I am determined if I keep your secret, to have part of the spoils.'

"'Well, that is but fair,' said the tall man, 'so sit down, landlord, and we will all put our pistols on the table.'

"'No,' said I, 'mine shall stay in my hands, they do no harm there.' So saying, I seated myself, and then putting the pocket-book away, one of the men took fifty sovereigns out of the hat, and offered them to me, at the same time telling me I must take an oath never to tell

whilst I lived what had passed. I told them I was ready to take the oath, but I must have a full third of the booty, at least of the gold, and I would leave all the paper, of which they had, I knew, a good deal, to them.

"Finding I knew rather more about what they had got, than they expected, they at last agreed to divide the money into three equal parts, and I swore never to relate what had passed, or to say a word that could injure them.

"'And now,' said the tall man, slapping my shoulder, so as to make me jump, 'remember, landlord, you have insisted upon your *share* of our spoils, and by ——, I swear, you shall come in for a *share* of the hanging, if we swing; so for your own sake, keep your tongue quiet, and get drunk as seldom as you can.'

"They then left the house. The rest you know; but you cannot know the misery I suffered from that moment. Every stranger that entered, I thought was going to drag me to justice; and when I heard that Mr. Ilderton

and his housekeeper had been murdered, I felt that I should have been glad to have fled the country for ever."

The remainder of Robert's letter relating only to his own sufferings and repentance, it is not necessary to dwell upon. Poor Jane was some weeks ere she recovered from the almost frantic state of mind into which the deplorable end of a man, whom she had tenderly loved, and who, during many years, had been an excellent father and husband, had plunged her. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to travel, she left Southend, with her family, preferring to labour, as she must do, at the most servile employments for a livelihood, in some place where her wretched husband's name and fate were unknown, to remaining in the place of her nativity.

The sign of that trade, which was believed to have led to Robert's destruction, was pulled down, and burnt by the villagers, and no one at present likes to live in the house he inha-

bited, since the ignorant and superstitious avow, that he may frequently be heard at night, moaning and lamenting over his misdeeds.

With the last occupant of the moated house, the ancient family of Ilderton became extinct, and the property has, in consequence of no will being forthcoming, reverted to the crown. No one will now reside there, and but few, amongst the simple inhabitants of this neighbourhood, can be induced to pass the house after dusk, since it is rumoured amongst them, that the unquiet spirits of Mr. Ilderton and his faithful old housekeeper, may frequently be seen flitting from place to place; whilst that of the young lady, who committed suicide nearly two centuries ago, yet does penance nightly at the edge of the moat.

END OF VOL. II.

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